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The Nation.

January 25, 1986 $1.25; U.K. 65p

JAN 29 1986

EDITORIAL

THE LATEST NEW NIXON

Richard Nixon has become the Rodney Dangerfield of politics. Ever since he evaded prison, thanks to President Ford's pre-emptive pardon for his Watergate crimes, he has been looking for respect. He has revisited China four times, to remind liberal centrists of his single foreign policy triumph in office; he has come out for "hardheaded détente," a phrase calculated to impress moderate conservatives; he has let it be known that the President "frequently" sought his advice before the Geneva summit, a bit of inside information aimed at Reaganites.

Last week, in an article for the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times*, "Lessons of the Alger Hiss Case," Nixon's campaign to rehabilitate his image hit a new low. Discussing Priscilla Hiss, who died in 1984, he noted, "In the case of Communist couples . . . the wife is often more extremist than the husband."

In another dubious lesson, he tried to argue that because the recent wave of Americans allegedly caught spying for the Russians did it for the money rather than out of political conviction, the Soviet Union has "lost the ideological battle"—as if Alger Hiss, who was convicted only of perjury, had ever admitted to the ideology (or actions) of which he was accused.

The real lesson of the Hiss case, for anyone who has taken the trouble to read the thousands of pages of material released in the past few years under the Freedom of Information Act—which document how his telephone was tapped, his right to counsel compromised, etc.—has to do with how hard it is for ideologically tainted defendants to get a fair trial in times of political hysteria.

All Nixon's latest image-improvement campaign shows is that there was never a new Nixon or even an old one. There are as many Nixons as are needed to exploit the political fears and trends of the hour. Some things never change.

HOPELESSNESS IN ULSTER
Paul O'Dwyer
Bernard D. Nossiter

LIBERIA
Michael Massing

RETURN OF COINTELPRO?
Alfie Kohn

LELYVELD'S SOUTH AFRICA
George Packer

TOOLS FOR DIVESTMENT
Holly Sklar

OUT OF 'WILD KINGDOM'
Andrew Kopkind

HE LEADETH US FROM PORN

GOD BLESS YOU, EDWIN MEESE!

KURT VONNEGUT

I have read much of the heart-rending testimony extracted from victims of sexual abuse at meetings of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. It is clear to me that our government must be given the power to suppress words and images that cause sexually motivated insanity and crimes. As the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word." I myself make my living with words, and I am now ashamed. In view of the terrible damage freely circulated ideas can do to a society, and particularly to children, I beg my government to delete from my works all thoughts that might be dangerous. I want the help of our elected leaders in bringing my thoughts into harmony with their own and thus into harmony with the thoughts of those who elected them. That is democracy.

Attempting to make amends at this late date, I call to the attention of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, and God bless the Attorney General, the fundamental piece of obscenity from which all others spring, the taproot of the deadly poisonous tree. Kill the taproot and the tree dies, and with it its deadly fruits, which are rape, sodomy, wife-beating, child abuse, divorce, abortion, adultery, prostitution, syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes and AIDS.

I will read this most vile of all pieces of so-called literature aloud, so that those who dare can feel the full force of it. I recommend that all persons under 14, and all persons under 30 not accompanied by an adult, leave the room. Those remaining who have heart trouble or respiratory difficulties or who are prone to commit rape at the slightest provocation may want to stick their

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LETTERS.

HOPELESSNESS IN ULSTER

New York City

A profound admiration for Bernard D. Nossiter makes it difficult for me to quarrel with him, but I fear that for all his firsthand observations he suffers from the ailment that afflicts so many of my fellow American liberals when they view the Northern Ireland scene ["Hope in Ulster," Nov. 30].

The description of the Irish Republican Army as a "totalitarian menace to Ireland's democracy" is old hat. For more than a decade the British have been saying the I.R.A. is Communist in order to dissuade Irish-Americans from lending assistance. The ploy has been a failure as far as the Irish-American community is concerned but has been accepted by many others who should know better.

What is meant by "Ireland's democracy?" The I.R.A. operates mainly in Northern Ireland, which is under the direct rule of Britain. A few years ago the British Parliament enacted a special law for Northern Ireland creating a court system that banned juries from political cases. The Catholic ghetto refers to it as the Diplock court, after the late Lord Diplock, its inventor. Under the law a prisoner may be held incommunicado for seventy-two hours. The burden of proof is on the defendant to show that a confession extracted under those circumstances was involuntary. Under the rules of the same court informers are used with more efficiency than in the good old days of Joe McCarthy and the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and the prizes are the same—a new identity and 100,000 pounds sterling. The Diplock court also approves of holding prisoners awaiting trial without bail for as long as two years.

Regarding Nossiter's idea of "democracy" in southern Ireland, it should be noted that some of the worst features of British law in Northern Ireland have been copied. There too a jury trial is denied in political cases, and recently the hangman has been brought back. Furthermore, one can hardly characterize as a democracy any country that by law bans divorce and denies access to national radio and television to the representatives of the Sinn Fein Party, which is recognized as a legitimate political party.

The reference to "sentimental Irish-Americans who confuse the gunmen with a liberation movement" is at best patronizing and at worst continues an annoying stereotype. . . . Last year an inquiry conducted by a group of international lawyers headed by Kader Asmal condemned the British occupation forces for their "shoot to kill" policy by which fourteen unarmed subjects were gunned down—not by Protestants but by British security forces. Nossiter's characterization of Irish-Americans is totally unjustified. A conspiracy of silence about the happenings in Northern Ireland has kept the American public from knowing anything about the daily acts of discrimination in housing, health and employment, and daily harassment by British security forces. However, many in the Irish-American community visit Ireland and others read Irish-American weekly papers or listen to the many Irish radio programs. It does not surprise them that spirited members of the ghettos have chosen death by starvation in prison over continued persecution and enslavement, or that open warfare has broken out with all its brutality.

The presentation of the employment figures is deceptive. "The bitter war flows from the largely successful attempt by 1 million Protestants to exclude 600,000 Catholics from high-paying jobs," appears to be fair. But in the first place it is not the 1 million Protestants who are to blame, but rather the Empire's system of divide, conquer and exploit which has worked so well everywhere and is now operating to Britain's advantage in her last colony. Protestant workers should no more be held to blame than white workers in Mississippi or New York when the system gives them a preference in employment. Like our white population in the South the preference system does not enrich them but does give them the illusion of being afforded special treatment. "Unemployment runs at a ferocious 22 percent, much higher among Catholics," is also a misleading phrase. It gives the impression that the figure represents the rate of employment in the Protestant community. But that percentage is only struck by including the "ferocious" 60 percent unemployed in most of the Catholic ghettos.

Irish-Americans have no illusions about the I.R.A. They no more endorse its every act than Americans generally endorsed the excesses of our armed forces in Vietnam or elsewhere. Irish-Americans view it as the natural consequence of the constant acts of brutality and the indignities heaped on 40 percent of the Northern Ireland population. Irish-Americans, like American liberals, understand Nelson Mandela and his followers. They, too, have concluded that after the failure of all their well-meaning appeals to reason, they must rely on their own resources, and they resort to insurrection as the only means of gaining their freedom. Irish-Americans, like American liberals, know that when Salvadorans are brutalized they will revolt, and that when Nicaraguans have shaken off their shackles they will not permit a return of the corrupt dictatorship that kept them enslaved. Nor will they take a puppet as a substitute.

What American liberals find difficult to accept is that Irish men and women have the same deep commitment to resist brutality and tyranny, will fight with the same ferocity and will respond in kind to acts of brutality in order to rid the country of the cause of their enslavement. If you prick us, do we not bleed?

The I.R.A. is like any other army, including the British forces, and should be judged by the circumstances surrounding its creation and by the recognized rules of war. If it be found guilty, then let it be judged by the Nuremberg rules, not by a tyrant's court and a bigoted judge while its persecutors not only go uncharged and unpunished but prescribe the rules for the trial and incarceration of their victims. And let the British be judged by the same rules.

In 1969, in a movement patterned after Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi, civil rights marchers sought to openly protest on a march from Belfast to Derry only to be beaten by hooligans and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That episode was the signal for a pogrom in the ghetto and the burning of Bombay Street while the police looked on. With help from no one—not from Dublin, not from London—Catholics in the ghetto turned to a moribund I.R.A. and the rest is history. Maybe the I.R.A. is not made up of freedom fighters, but people in the ghettos think it is, and they are in a unique position to make that judgment. Anyway, the I.R.A. should be held to no higher standards than our own Revolutionary Army or the behavior of any army in our time.

The ending of Nossiter's article absolves the real culprit: "Ulster killings are surely not over. The I.R.A. and the Protestant gunmen have a vested interest in continued violence." Not a word of the other gunmen, the Special Air Services, the assassins selected from service abroad. No mention of the vested interest of the Empire. Not a word about British violence which suppresses both Protestant and Catholic, favoring one over the other the better to keep these good people divided. Not a word about Bloody Sunday, when fourteen Irish men and women participating in a peaceful march were gunned down by paratroopers. Not a word about Britain as a felon convicted by the European Court of Human Rights for torturing Irish prisoners in Long Kesh. Not a word about the subsequent report of Amnesty International that the practice continues. Not a word about the reports last year of the Haldane Society or the National Council of Civil Liberties (both London-based), both of which condemned the British rule in Northern Ireland. Not a word about the poll conducted by a prestigious organization that found that 70 percent of the people of Britain want their government to execute an orderly withdrawal from Irish soil. Not a word about the plastic bullets that in the past few years have killed fifteen people, most of them children. These lethal weapons were not in the hands of either Irish Catholics or Irish Protestants. They came out of British

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EDITORIALS.

Enemy of the Week

Countries in the Middle East fade in and out of fashion so fast, and their leaders rise and fall from grace so dramatically, that it is hard to predict just who's zooming who from the morning papers or the evening news.

Syria's fortunes, in the American political and media sweepstakes at least, are among the most volatile. One day a tacit ally in the campaign against the Palestine Liberation Organization, it became an instant enemy when Israel occupied Beirut, then a constructive partner in the complicated negotiations to stabilize the region, then a valuable resource in dealing with Shiite terrorists, then a responsible guarantor of peace among warring Lebanese factions, and most recently a troublesome antagonist with missiles aimed at Israeli planes. President Hafez al-Assad is variously portrayed as a villainous assassin of foreign enemies and domestic opponents, a sly supporter of hijackers and car-bombers, and a responsible statesman working behind the scenes for American interests. Are we propping up Assad this week or plotting to kill him? Not even your National Security Council knows for sure.

The problem is not so much with Syria, which consistent-

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of barbarism and altruism as its neighbors display, but with American policy, which is as contradictory and self-defeating as it has been since the trouble in Southeast Asia some years back. In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Rome and Vienna, Washington first followed Israel's lead and fixed on the P.L.O. as the culprit, then switched to Colonel Qaddafi and then, after ordering sanctions against Libya, announced that Syria was to blame. Recent reports indicate that the airport hit squads were trained at Syrian-supplied bases in Lebanon and embarked on their missions from Damascus.

So the Coral Sea and the Saratoga with their flotillas will steam toward Tartus (the port where the Syrians obligingly recovered the body of Leon Klinghoffer), and sanctions will be ordered against the Assad regime, right? Of course not. American actions are not directed against the perpetrators of terrorism, who can rarely be identified, but against political targets selected for their vulnerability and symbolic value. Assad occupies a position of relative strength. He can perform services and pull strings for the United States just as easily as he can make mischief. Until recently, Qaddafi was isolated and weak. The Reagan Administration, like every bully on the block, beats up on the kids least likely to strike back—the nerds, the losers, the flakes. It doesn't do any harm; but then it doesn't do any good either.

Reagan's failure to imagine a policy of stabilization and reconciliation in the Middle East is appalling enough, but it is even more distressing to watch his liberal opposition fumble and fold in the search for alternatives. Democrats eagerly praise the President for his "moderate" response of sanctions against Libya, perhaps believing that any time Reagan decides not to dispatch troops or push the button is an occasion for thanksgiving. Senator Howard Metzenbaum, a paragon of liberalism, said he wouldn't mind at all if Qaddafi were "eliminated." It was left to Defense Secretary Weinberger, a paragon of a very different kind, to defend the moderate approach. But a wrong policy mildly pursued is still wrong, and there is no indication that a right one can be formulated by the forces now at work in Washington.

At some point, those few political figures who still maintain a tenuous hold on their senses will realize that the antiterrorism campaign that Reagan has mounted has little to do with its stated objective. It is meant primarily to create a climate of crisis in which intervention will be legitimate, repression will be possible, militarism will be popular, and the whole program of Reaganism can be advanced. Liberals who accept the terms of the campaign are playing into the very hands that seek to crush them. The point, of course, is not to moderate the terms but to change them.

NEXT WEEK

Maria Margaronis
and
Elizabeth Pochoda
on the
PEN International Congress

I.N.S. on Trial

With no discernible trace of irony, the Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1984 developed a campaign of surveillance, infiltration, search and seizure against Central American refugees and named it Operation Sojourner. The fruits of its labor are now displayed in a Tucson, Arizona, courtroom, where eleven activists from among the clergy and laity of the sanctuary movement are on trial. They are charged with various criminal acts involving the transporting and harboring of illegal aliens.

What presents a more interesting judicial problem is the behavior of the I.N.S. In the course of the trial it has become clear that the government is employing tactics against political organizations that are more invasive than any that have been seen in this country since the F.B.I.'s Cointelpro and the C.I.A.'s CHAOS, during the era of Vietnam War protests. The sanctuary movement has a strong religious base, and for that reason two major churches, the Presbyterian and the Lutheran, are suing the government over Sojourner. They maintain that the campaign of secret tape recording, infiltration of agents into churches and other forms of surveillance violate several constitutionally guaranteed protections, including those of religious observance, privacy and due process. The government responds that the sanctuary movement is no more than a criminal racket, trafficking in illegal immigrants, and that what's fair against the mob is fair against the ministry.

Optimists thought that the reforms instituted to rein in government surveillance activities after the chaotic 1960s would permanently prevent the kind of harassment the I.N.S. conducted against the churches and refugees in the Southwest. As another suit, filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, details, the government's tactics also included break-ins and warrantless searches in several states in an obvious attempt to cripple the movement, not simply to capture aliens (see Alfie Kohn's article on page 74). The optimists seem to have been wrong. A new political movement has provoked a new wave of repression, and another go at reform will have to stem the tide.

Forgery Revealed

A few years ago a freelance writer who claimed to have hung out with Khmer Rouge guerrillas in Cambodia sold a firsthand account of his adventures to *The New York Times Magazine*. It turned out that the author hadn't been within 8,000 miles of the killing fields. Now it appears that the magazine was the victim of another, even more brazen hoax. Its January 12 issue contains an article titled "Declaring War on Organized Crime," which was purportedly written by Ronald Reagan. Internal evidence suggests, however, that the President's ghostwriters did not write the article.

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Whoever wrote the piece cleverly timed it to anticipate the release of the interim report of the President's Commission on Organized Crime. The forger knew that *The Times* would be a sucker for a self-promoting article by the President praising his Administration's efforts to win a total "victory" in the war against the "invisible lawless empire." He or she was right: the magazine's editors ran it two days before the report was scheduled to appear. But the hoaxer was too clever by half. It turned out that the report was critical of the lack of "a coherent Federal strategy to attack organized crime's corruption of our business institutions and labor organizations." The commission also attacked unnamed Administration figures' "contacts" with Teamsters leader Jackie Presser, which, it said, undermined public confidence in the White House's dedication to purging mob-dominated unions. As is well known, Reagan, Vice President George Bush and Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d broke bread with Presser on various festive occasions in the past, and were repaid for this conferral of respectability with the union's endorsement of the G.O.P. ticket in 1980 and 1984.

The forger did a brilliant job of imitating the President's style. The obligatory reminiscence about the Screen Actors Guild, the equation of Communists with mobsters, the "evil empire" switcheroo, were masterful touches. Nevertheless, we can't believe that the President could have been so, shall we say, disengaged as to authorize such an article, given the embarrassing findings of the crime commission. Or could he?

CBS and the World

"Evening in America," the commercial begins. The camera pans across a series of cozy Rockwellian tableaux, families in living rooms around the country gathering about their television sets, everyone tuned to the neo-avuncular visage of Dan Rather. "*CBS Evening News*," concludes the wholesome narration, "We keep America on top of the world."

The baldness of that statement, as smooth and oiled as Rambo's clenched body, is at first somewhat startling. One never quite expects the networks to come right out and say it like that, so blatantly to assert the nature of their mission. And yet, there it is: We keep America on top of the world.

Naturally, CBS executives would insist that what they mean by the assertion is that they keep America informed as to what's going on around the world. Of course, it's precisely at that task that *CBS Evening News* fails so woefully. In recent months, for example, it has provided no on-site coverage of the aerial bombing campaign that has come to dominate the war in El Salvador; of the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Philippines from the point of view of that country's growing insurgency movement (the coverage CBS does allow from the Philippines generally confines itself to the much narrower spectrum band of the coming Marcos-Aquino election and its implications for the continued presence of American military bases there); or of the human rights situation on the ground in Angola, a country the Reagan Administration has denounced repeatedly, without any need for corroborating evidence, as a totalitarian hellhole, thereby fanning the flames for American intervention in the form of aid to so-called freedom fighters.

Last year, Argentina witnessed an extraordinary trial of the leaders of a series of American-backed military juntas for the massive human rights abuses they countenanced during their vicious "dirty war" of the late 1970s and early 1980s. That trial went largely unreported from the scene, save for one spot which ran at the very end of the most recent hearing. The near-genocidal war of the Guatemalan generals against their Indian population failed to provoke the world-watchers at *CBS Evening News* to dispatch any crews to the country except, briefly, during the recent elections, for which they arrived in time to announce the instantaneous transformation of the country into a full-fledged democracy.

In fact, CBS seems to be covering less and less of the world these days. By comparison, ABC's *World News Tonight* is brimming with international fare, perhaps because of the technological infrastructure the network had to erect for its *Nightline*, which each evening must put together a half-hour "in-depth" report on any suddenly topical subject arising anywhere in the world. Even though the ideological bias of the two shows may be virtually identical (ABC's idea of thoughtful commentary consists of the wide-eyed musings of George Will), the tone of the program is one of curiosity, and that curiosity is in itself mildly subversive. ABC's anchor Peter Jennings, a Canadian national, seems authentically interested in what's happening out there, while Dan Rather, the former marine, seems primarily intent on continuously projecting CBS's house tone of sober-minded, rock-solid integrity in the glorious tradition of Edward R. Murrow. It's hard to imagine Rather ever parrying a challenge from Ronald Reagan the way he once did when Richard Nixon taunted him: "Are you running for something?" "No, sir, Mr. President, are you?" The fact is that Rather is running for something—the mantle of Walter Cronkite. Almost all the longer feature pieces during the last half of each evening's newscast on CBS tend to concern national, if not parochial, subjects, usually tinted in a soft, anecdotal light. Indeed, they are often just slightly extended versions of the Reaganesque pastoral visuals strung together at the front of the show's new promotional ads.

"*CBS Evening News*: We keep America on top of the world." This assertion contains a barely hidden formula: Precisely to the extent that CBS fails to keep America on top of the world in informational terms, it colludes in doing so in geopolitical terms. Conversely, precisely to the extent that CBS might one day begin to inform the American citizenry of what's actually happening out there in the world, it could conceivably begin to threaten that geopolitical dominance.

LAWRENCE WESCHLER

Lawrence Weschler, a staff writer at The New Yorker, *is author of* The Passion of Poland *(Pantheon).*

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In 1976 I made a trip to Poland to interview the leaders of KOR, the Committee for the Defense of Workers. It struck me as interesting that there was a new dissident group in Eastern Europe that addressed itself as much to the native working class as to the disaffected intelligentsia or the organs of Western public opinion. I was avid to meet Jacek Kuron in particular, having read his socialist manifesto, written in a state prison. I thought that he might make a nice change from the God-bothering, naïve characters who so often turn up west of the Oder-Neisse Line and talk as if welfare capitalism (and even some of its militarist and authoritarian variants and mutants) were the last word on human happiness.

He did make a nice change from such company. I was received in his cramped apartment, and we settled down to a long dialectical conversation which was punctuated only by repeated peals of the telephone. Almost all the calls turned out to be threats against Kuron, who was organizing a fund for some workers recently fired in the city of Radom. (Neither of us, it goes without saying, imagined in 1976 that Polish workers would ever pull off a revolt.) The abuse, most of it police-inspired, featured suggestions that Kuron "fuck off to Israel," and similar injunctions from the baser bits of the Polish past. I remarked weakly that it must be unpleasant to get so many such calls. "Indeed, it is," he said. "It would be even more unpleasant if I actually was Jewish."

I admired the man's stoicism. And when we came to discuss his socialist manifesto, he cautioned me to ignore it. "The only principle I fight for now," he told me, "is the right to *have* principles. This means that only pluralism is worth demanding in today's conditions." I was to hear the same from Adam Michnik, a KOR stalwart who is Jewish but who has suffered as a democrat. "Our view" Michnik said, "is that the citizen is not the property of the state."

On other excursions to Eastern Europe and in other encounters with Eastern European oppositionists, I heard the same thing. Milovan Djilas and the militants of the *Praxis* group, from entirely different perspectives, made the point for Yugoslavia. Rudolf Bahro said as much for East Germany, and the Charter 77 activists have been upholding the same convictions, in the face of hysterical and sometimes farcical persecution, for almost a decade in Czechoslovakia. More recently, Hungarian voices have been added to the chorus.

I mention this because there is sometimes a wariness on the left about such a stand. This wariness derives chiefly from the pious hypocrisy of the right, which has managed to associate the good name of "dissident" entirely with anti-Communism in many American minds. This has not by itself been enough to muddy the question. Most of the left has an understanding of Stalinism (as indeed much of it did when Stalin was all the rage among liberals).

Still, I get only abusive letters from comrades when I attack Israel or the Soviet Union. An excerpt from one such letter gives an idea of what I'm driving at, and will, I think, be recognized as a familiar mentality by many readers:

> It has been a handy rule-of-thumb for me that, in foreign affairs, if Reagan was for something, that was reason enough for me to be against it. And all right-wing elements were loud in their support of poor, mistreated Solidarity.

I would have replied directly to the writer, whose letter made many less simplistic points, but I inadvertently threw away the envelope on which she had written her return address. So here is my belated answer:

First, and most obviously, it is a mistake to let Ronald Reagan decide one's position on anything. Automatic, reflexive decisions allow the right to determine what the left thinks. Nothing dialectical about that.

Second, and as a corollary, it is a mistake to let a regime of any stripe dictate one's thinking. To take a trivial example, an apologist for the Polish authorities is now forbidden to praise the man (Edward Gierek) whom only a few years ago it was dangerous to criticize. It is not progress to teach a parrot a new word. This holds for Khrushchevites as much as for Maoists and Fidelistas.

Third, and finally, Stalinism is a system that has already revealed its true colors. There are no more surprises in store. Some hopefuls used to contend that say what you might about this or that state monopoly of thought, there was still the full belly and the contented crèche. This argument has come to sicken even the Chinese, who were poor and colonized enough to fall for it at one time. A regime that treats the citizen as property will sooner or later let that property decay, just as feudalism did. Not even the self-interest of the government monopoly will prevent it. Some of our best friends in the Third World prove this point by mounting literacy campaigns and censorship drives at the same time.

I feel under no compulsion to argue that I remain a socialist while holding these views. I was a socialist to begin with. The revolutions of the twentieth century are, in many ways, their own justification. There is no case, except perhaps Cambodia, where it can be said that the old regime was preferable or could have been preserved without comparable results. And there have been many counterrevolutions that do not even claim to be advancing the democratic cause. For many of them (in Iran, Chile, the Philippines, Guatemala, Indonesia) American liberals have paid dues while smugly talking about the God That Failed. The point is not to fall for god in the first place and to recognize that opposition in Eastern Europe deserves our respect and support, not tactically or cosmetically, but for its own sake. And to support the right of opposition is to allow it to take any form, predictable or congenial or otherwise.

My first recommendation in 1986, then, is a subscription to *East European Reporter*. It brings clearly written news and honest debate from countries where both manifestations are illegal. It can be ordered from Box 222, London WC2H 9RP, for $32 per year. It covers, with eloquence and irony, the battles over environment, national minorities, work and intellectual liberty. The letter from Adam Michnik to Desmond Tutu in the Autumn 1985 number is exemplary of its kind.

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ARTICLES.

CHESTER CROCKER'S AFRICA

How Liberia Held 'Free' Elections

MICHAEL MASSING

On December 10, the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa anxiously awaited testimony from Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker, the Administration's top policy-maker for that continent. Crocker had been called to testify on recent events in Liberia. America's closest African ally had undergone the most wrenching crisis in its history, including a stolen election, numerous arrests, newspaper closings and an attempted coup that may have taken hundreds, perhaps a thousand, lives. Through it all, the Reagan Administration had kept quiet. Now Crocker was going to break the silence.

To appreciate the significance of his remarks, it is necessary to understand the role of Liberia in U.S. foreign policy. Founded by freed American slaves in 1847, Liberia is host to nearly 5,000 Americans—diplomats, businessmen, missionaries and military advisers. The Voice of America transmitter for all of sub-Saharan Africa is located in Liberia; so is an Omega navigation station, one of five in the world, which is used to monitor shipping in the eastern Atlantic (its 427-meter transmission tower is the tallest structure in Africa). U.S. intelligence data from West Africa is channeled through the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia. U.S. investment in Liberia approaches half a billion dollars; Firestone operates the world's largest rubber plantation there.

Personifying this special relationship, as it's called, is Liberian head of state Samuel Doe. Doe is one of the most quixotic leaders in Africa. On coming to power in 1980, he was greeted as a liberator. With a handful of junior military officers, Doe overthrew an autocratic regime that, for more than a century, had ruled on behalf of a narrow elite descended from the original American settlers. Within days of the coup, thirteen officials from the former regime were tied to stakes on a Monrovia beach and publicly executed. Doe, a 28-year-old master sergeant and a high-school dropout, promised to hold free and fair elections, institute civilian rule and, for the first time, extend power to the mass of indigenous Liberians.

It did not work out that way. Master Sergeant Doe soon became a five-star general and, after receiving an honorary doctorate from a South Korean university, took to calling himself doctor. The once-humble soldier donned three-piece suits, built himself a plush country retreat and zoomed around Monrovia in a chauffeured Mercedes. The army was treated to improved housing (courtesy of the United States), pay increases and new weapons. When asked last year by a Nigerian journalist what he had done for the masses, Doe could only respond that "we have also done a lot for the people, not just the army, since we came to power; a lot of things which I cannot recall now." Liberia's 2 million people suffer an astounding 80 percent illiteracy rate, and unemployment exceeds 50 percent. Since 1980 the gross national product has shrunk at a rate of almost 5 percent a year. Last summer the government was so broke it fell three months behind in paying public employees.

Liberia's economic collapse is remarkable given the extent of American generosity. From about $20 million in 1980, U.S. assistance rose to more than $80 million last year—the most U.S. aid per capita to any African country. About $12 million of that amount goes to Liberia's military, which faces few external threats and is primarily occupied in keeping order. U.S. military advisers, including Green Berets, have visited Liberia to train Doe's army. Bags of food stamped "United States of America" are visible everywhere in the country, and some 200 members of the Peace Corps work there. As tokens of his appreciation, Doe expelled the Soviet Ambassador and established ties with Israel. The general met with Ronald Reagan in 1982—a visit that went smoothly until the President introduced Doe to the White House press corps as Chairman Moe.

During his meeting with Reagan, Doe reportedly promised to hold free elections. In the summer of 1984, the general announced elections for the following year and, in anticipation, lifted a four-year-old ban on political activity.

DRAWINGS BY J-C SUARÈS

Michael Massing, a New York City–based writer, visited Liberia in September 1985 on behalf of the Fund for Free Expression and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

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However, rather than return to the barracks as he had promised, Doe declared his intention to stand as a candidate. To meet the constitutionally required minimum age of 35, he pushed back his birth date two years. Over the subsequent months, Doe demonstrated just what free and fair elections meant to him:

§ He passed Decree 88A, an Orwellian edict that made it a crime to spread "rumors, lies and disinformation" about the government.

§ He jailed Amos Sawyer, leader of the opposition Liberian People's Party and a professor at the University of Liberia. When students demonstrated against the arrest, Doe's troops invaded the campus, shot and killed an undetermined number of students, wounded scores of others, raped women and stripped professors naked. The government refused to investigate the incident.

§ Government troops nailed shut the offices of *The Daily Observer*, Liberia's leading independent newspaper. The paper's chief offense was playing a story about labor unrest more prominently than one about a speech by Doe to street peddlers. The general also temporarily closed another newspaper and imprisoned three journalists.

§ Two major opposition parties, the Liberian People's Party and the United People's Party (U.P.P.), were banned. The ostensible reason was that they subscribed to "foreign ideologies," i.e., socialism. More to the point, both parties had mass followings. The U.P.P., in fact, was widely considered the most popular party in the country.

§ Dozens of political figures were thrown in jail. Most prominent was Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a former Liberian Finance Minister. Johnson-Sirleaf had studied at Harvard University, worked for the World Bank and served as a Citibank vice president in its Nairobi office. Last summer she returned to Liberia to help found the centrist Liberia Action Party (L.A.P.). In a speech to the Union of Liberian Associates in America, in Philadelphia on July 6, Johnson-Sirleaf accused the Doe government of mismanagement and corruption and said it was run by "many idiots." On her return to Liberia at the end of the month, she was arrested and charged with sedition, a crime punishable by death. She and other prisoners were eventually released, but only after sharp international protest.

When the election was finally held, last October 15, the L.A.P. and two other parties were permitted to run against Doe's National Democratic Party. The turnout was heavy, but election day was marked by widespread reports of fraud. Teams of observers were barred from many polling places, and a batch of ballots was discovered smoldering in a heap north of the capital. According to virtually all independent observers and foreign correspondents, the election was won by L.A.P. candidate Jackson Doe (no relation to Samuel). However, after the votes were tallied by a government-appointed commission working behind closed doors, General Doe was declared the victor, with 50.9 percent of the vote.

A month later, on November 12, a coup was launched. It was led by Thomas Quiwonkpa, a popular general who had helped Doe engineer the 1980 coup but who later broke with him over his autocratic rule. Quiwonkpa, who had fled Liberia in 1983 and moved to Baltimore, made his way back via neighboring Sierra Leone. With a force of only thirty-five men, he quickly gained control of the nation's main radio station. When it appeared that his coup had succeeded, hundreds of Liberians took to Monrovia's streets to celebrate.

The rejoicing was premature. Troops loyal to Doe managed to beat back Quiwonkpa's meager force. Quiwonkpa himself died. Then Doe's troops went on a rampage. It is unclear exactly how many lost their lives in the resulting bloodbath, but estimates range from 400 to more than 2,000. The government also rounded up individuals it perceived as a threat and accused them of complicity in the coup. Among those imprisoned were Jackson Doe, Johnson-Sirleaf, newspaper publisher Mamolu Sirleaf (a distant relative) and BBC reporter Isaac Bantu. In all, probably more than one hundred people were jailed. While some have been released, Doe and Johnson-Sirleaf, among others, remain in prison awaiting trial.

The U.S. Congress reacted sharply to these developments. Last spring, it passed a resolution conditioning the Administration's 1986 aid request for Liberia—$86 million—on the holding of free and fair elections. When Johnson-Sirleaf and other Liberians were imprisoned last summer, many members from both parties signed a letter urging Doe to release them. Even Jesse Helms has received Liberian opposition figures visiting Washington.

It was thus with great anticipation that the Senate Subcommittee on Africa awaited Crocker's testimony on December 10. Members of the panel were astounded by what they heard. Yes, said Crocker, two of the biggest parties had been banned, Decree 88A had forbidden criticism of the government, and the final vote had been counted behind closed doors. Nonetheless, he asserted, the election's "shortcomings" should not obscure its "noteworthy, positive aspects." Among these, he maintained, were the participation of four political parties, the press's ability to report opposition activities and the large, orderly turnout. Therefore, said Crocker, "there is now the beginning, however imperfect, of a democratic experience that Liberia and its friends can use as a benchmark for future elections—one on which they want to build." Overall, he said, "election day was a remarkable achievement. . . . The Liberian experience was not only important for Liberia but for all of West Africa." As a result, he concluded, the United States would stand by Doe:

> To walk away would be irresponsible and clearly viewed as such elsewhere in Africa, where we are seen as having a unique responsibility for assisting Liberia. Abdication of that responsibility could provoke chaos and bloodshed, endangering the lives of nearly 5,000 Americans in the country.

Crocker's remarks were met with disbelief. "It's time that the U.S. stopped playing Uncle Sucker to this dictator," said Democratic Senator John Kerry. "Why should the U.S. contribute $90 million a year to what is clearly an unpopular and unstable regime?" Subcommittee chair Nancy Kasse-

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★★★★ WHO WILL DECIDE AMERICA'S FUTURE? ★★★★

Will it be Jerry Falwell and his motley array of bigots, war-hawks, misanthropes and Mammon-worshippers? Or a patriotic majority of decent and compassionate Americans who believe in peace, democracy and social justice?

To all people and organizations working for peace, social justice, the environment, civil, welfare and human rights and a better America: The time has come to answer the scoundrels and Tories who wrap themselves in the American flag while they go about the dirty business of destroying our nation and our people!

TORY WOLVES IN PATRIOT CLOTHING

For five years Americans have been subjected to a constant barrage of double-speak by the present administration. Weapons of frightful horror and destruction are named "peace-keepers." Fascist and racist regimes that slaughter and enslave their people are embraced in the name of the American nation. Under the discredited slogan of "peace through strength," present-day Tories accelerate an insane arms race that weakens and bankrupts our country and threatens us and the world with annihilation.

In the name of "free enterprise" and "the American way" they give greed and avarice carte blanche to loot the nation's wealth; white collar criminals who head huge financial and industrial empires that rob and defraud the public and the government are routinely protected by the "justice" department.

Misanthropy is enthroned in the name of curbing alleged "big government"; millions of homeless and hungry are ignored; public education, health, transportation and the great urban centers are kept in a state of decay and the nation's crumbling infrastructure is ignored. The law of the jungle replaces decency and compassion; public and private graft and corruption are endemic and the nation flounders without a sense of direction or of national purpose.

MODERN TORIES DESTROY OUR NATION

The flag-waving scoundrels of the Reagan administration are doing more to harm our nation than any real or imagined enemy has ever done or could hope to do. And they are doing it in the name of an Orwellian "second American Revolution"!

But we who work for peace, democracy and the environmnt and social justice are today's true patriots. We who love our land and the ideals on which our nation was founded, are the inheritors of the great tradition of Jefferson, Paine and Lincoln, and of the untold heroes and heroines who followed in their footsteps!

The people of our nation, more than those of any other in the world, have the power to influence the future of the human race. Let us join together to inspire a rebirth that will restore the vigor and idealism of our nation, re-establish a national sense of purpose in which we can take pride and once again earn the respect and appreciation of the peoples of the world!

THE PEOPLE ★ THE LAND ★ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

SPONSORS (partial list, organizations for identification only): Stan Anderson (Anti-Defamation League); Rev. Willie Taplin Barrow (Operation PUSH); George Brown (Ill. OAG); Dr. Margaret Burroughs (DuSable Museum); Perry Knop (Ill. So. Project); Ron Kovic (Author, "Born on the 4th of July"); Rabbi Robert J. Marx (Congregation Hakafa); Charle Pearl (National Farm-Labor Alliance); Dr. William Price (Citizens of Faith); Sr. Donna Quinn (National Coalition of American Nuns); Al Raby (Project VOTE); Rev. George Riddick (Operation PUSH); Leonard Robinson (UAW); Don Rose (Political Consultant); John Rossen (New Patriot Alliance); Edward Sadlowski (United Steel Workers); Bob Shuff (Ill. OAG); Studs Terkel (Author); Sr. Margaret Traxler (Institute of Women Today); James Weinstein (In These Times); Dr. Quentin D. Young (Physicians for Social Responsibility).

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AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, CHICAGO
JULY 4, 5, 6
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FALWELL BOASTS THAT HIS NEW "LIBERTY" FEDERATION WILL ENTER THE '86 ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN WITH 200 "MORAL MAJORITY" CANDIDATES AND A BUDGET OF $17 MILLION. JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN TO FRUSTRATE HIS PLAN TO DESTROY THE CONSTITUTION AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS. SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTION TODAY TO HELP PREPARE THIS CONFERENCE, AND TO INTERVENE IN THE '86 AND '88 ELECTIONS WITH CANDIDATES FROM THE PEACE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS.

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baum, a Republican, noted Congress's "growing concern" over developments in Liberia, adding that Doe's self-proclaimed victory "almost makes a mockery of the process."

A few days after the hearing, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution condemning the election as fraudulent and mandating the suspension of all military aid until free elections could be held. The House is expected to take up a similar resolution in the coming weeks. The Administration is determined to fight it, however, and the State Department has already enlisted Republican representatives willing to carry its water.

To its credit, the Administration has at times worked behind the scenes to restrain Doe. When the Liberian government imprisoned Johnson-Sirleaf and other political figures, the State Department suspended $25.5 million in aid. Doe squawked and threatened to send his foreign minister to Libya, but after a few weeks he relented and released the detainees. The aid was subsequently provided. After the attempted coup, Administration officials privately pressured Doe to refrain from mistreating political prisoners; U.N. ambassador Vernon Walters personally telephoned Doe to tell him to back off. Clearly, however, such actions have come only in response to pressure from Capitol Hill. The State Department badly wants to keep on good terms with Doe, and to do so it must placate disgruntled members of Congress.

The Administration's Liberia policy helps us see through President Reagan's professed concern for freedom in other African countries, particularly Angola. In Liberia, the State Department cannot argue that the United States is supporting an incumbent for fear of the alternative. Liberia is not about to head into the Soviet camp. Doe's threat last summer to strengthen ties with Libya proved to be a bluff. With U.S. aid making up one-third of the national budget, no Liberian leader could afford to alienate the United States. For many Liberians, American food shipments are the difference between eating and going hungry.

Furthermore, not one of Liberia's opposition parties poses any conceivable threat to the United States. The largest of these parties, the U.P.P., is left of center but moderate in outlook. Its leader, Baccus Matthews, studied at City University of New York and founded his party in the United States, where he lived for eleven years. Matthews stays in regular touch with the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia.

Finally, the Liberian people would never tolerate a break with Uncle Sam. Liberia's first constitution was written at Harvard Law School. The dollar is legal tender in the country. Monrovia has a Roxy Theater, a Capitol Hill and a grimy shantytown called West Point. Most important, Liberians take American ideals seriously. As its name indicates, Liberia was founded on a yearning for liberty. Thus many Liberians are perplexed by the Administration's policy. Visitors to the country hear a constant refrain: If only the Reagan people knew the reality of Liberia, they would back away from Doe.

The Administration, of course, does know. The problem is, it doesn't care. □

POLITICAL BURGLARIES

The Return of Cointelpro?

ALFIE KOHN

On the morning of December 5, when Garrett Brown arrived to unlock the tiny office of the New Institute of Central America, he discovered that the door was already open. So were the doors to the other offices along the hallway in the basement of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church—all of them belonging to groups involved with Central American issues. Even before he noticed the shattered doorjamb and the open file drawers, Brown knew there had been a burglary.

He knew that from experience. The offices had been broken into four times during the past thirteen months. Experience also taught him to expect that no valuables would be missing, and sure enough two calculators, a radio, a typewriter and $300 worth of stamps were right where he had left them the night before. But mail, financial records and other documents clearly had been examined.

Five suspicious break-ins at a cluster of offices belonging to groups opposed to the government's policies in Central America would be cause enough for concern. But the same thing has been taking place across the country at the offices of organizations doing Central America work, in the apartments of their staff members, at churches that give sanctuary to Central American refugees and at law firms that provide them with legal advice. The pattern has been chillingly consistent: important papers are stolen or rifled while money and valuables are left untouched. Some examples:

§ Michael Lent, national program coordinator for the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, found documents scattered about the floor of his Washington apartment on November 21. An airline ticket and $180 in cash were undisturbed.

§ The Arizona Refugee Project in Phoenix was burglarized twice during the last weekend in October. The intruder(s) had gone through the telephone logs and client files, ignoring more than $500 in cash. "We're about as noncontroversial as you can get, but we do have a lot of information [on refugees' cases,]" says Juan Rascon, director of the project, which provides legal services to Central American immigrants.

§ The University Baptist Church in Seattle was ransacked in July. The Rolodex was rifled and the keys to the rooms housing six refugees were missing. The burglar(s) had no interest in the church's tape recorder or petty cash.

§ A file box marked "Cases on Appeal" was stolen in

Alfie Kohn, a Cambridge writer, contributes frequently to The Nation. *His book,* No Contest: The Case Against Competition, *will be published by Houghton Mifflin in the fall.*

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September from Father David Myers, an attorney who represents Central American refugees in Guadalupe, Arizona.

The story has been much the same at the Michigan Interfaith Committee on Central American Human Rights (MICAH) in Detroit, the First United Methodist Church of Germantown in Philadelphia (a sanctuary for Guatemalan refugees) and the offices of the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant in Berkeley.

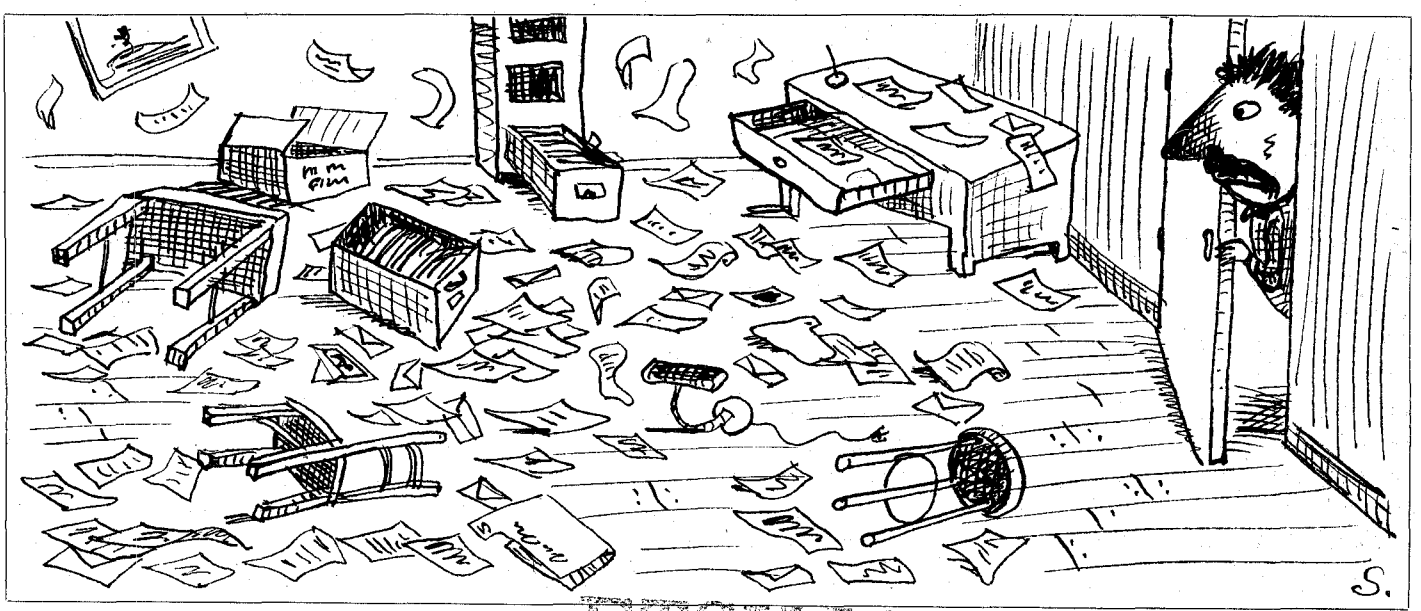
Some of the lawyers, ministers and organizers who have been victimized suggest that right-wing groups may be responsible for the break-ins. But others, noting the apparent nationwide coordination, think they detect the footprints of a Federal agency—perhaps the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Immigration and Naturalization Service. "It's reminiscent of the Cointelpro era," says David Lerner of the Center for Constitutional Rights. "These incidents suggest some form of official sanctioning or even government involvement." Spokespeople for the F.B.I. and the I.N.S. have denied any responsibility, but Lerner observes dryly, "They also said that during the 1970s." Moreover, an F.B.I. spokesman told Carol Ostrom of *The Seattle Times* that while the Bureau's regulations ordinarily prohibit burglary, there are different guidelines for foreign counterintelligence cases and terrorist activity.

Besides the similarity of the incidents and the precedent for government involvement, the break-ins should be viewed in the context of activities for which Federal agencies are known to be responsible. F.B.I. Director William Webster admitted last April that about one hundred people who visited Nicaragua had been interrogated by the Bureau [see Frank Donner, "Travelers' Warning for Nicaragua," *The Nation*, July 6/13, 1985]. Webster justified the questionings under the foreign counterintelligence rubric. The government's case in the current trial of eleven sanctuary workers in Tucson for immigration-law violations relies principally on the testimony of I.N.S. informers. In denying a Freedom of Information Act request for files on the Old Cambridge Baptist Church last November 12, the F.B.I. said those files might "reveal the identity of an individual who has furnished information to the F.B.I. under confidential circumstances."

The possibility that the Bureau has planted an informer among them has led Cambridge activists to press for a more thorough investigation by local officials. But Cambridge Police Chief Anthony Paolillo, who said in an interview that he had not known that valuables were left behind in the Baptist Church burglaries, told me that an F.B.I. agent assured him the Bureau was not involved, adding, "And I believe him." Government agents, he said, would be unlikely to break down doors. When I asked Representative Don Edwards, chair of the House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, about the break-ins, he acknowledged that they were "very suspicious" but he too was reluctant to blame the government, saying the F.B.I. would have made a more professional job of it. Others have remarked that such burglaries are not the best way for the government to obtain information.

Those objections, however, overlook the possibility that a government agency may be intentionally creating an impression of amateurishness or using right-wing groups to do its dirty work as was common in the 1960s. As for burglaries being an inefficient way to gather intelligence, the purpose may simply be harassment.

That interpretation is consistent with reports of other types of intimidation. Sara Murray, staff organizer for MICAH, says her group is still "losing parts of our mailings [to members] on a regular basis." Moreover, donations mailed to the organization sometimes never arrive, and telephone service to the office and her home has been mysteriously disrupted. Last April, a man telephoned Murray's roommate, identifying himself as a worker at a health clinic, and asked for the location of two Salvadoran refugee children, claiming that Murray wanted him to pick them up for her. It turned out that the clinic he mentioned did not exist. That same month, a cabdriver who seemed to be waiting for Murray warned her that her life was in danger and advised her to stop what she was doing. Murray later checked with



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the taxi company, which told her the driver was not an employee.

The Rev. Donovan Cook of the University Baptist Church in Seattle reported that a man with a walkie-talkie was seen near the church shortly before the burglary there and that a package from Nicaragua had arrived already opened. He complains of phone trouble, as does the Rev. Theodore Loder at the First United Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Several activists have reported being watched by well-dressed men with cameras or binoculars; others have been subjected to tax audits on returning from Nicaragua.

"The people suspicious of the F.B.I. have every right to be," says John Roberts, director of the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts. Before the Cointelpro activities were disclosed, he had dismissed such suspicions as paranoid. Now, he said, he knows better. The F.B.I. has "earned no trust. They were into more than we ever dreamed possible."

And Garrett Brown, who wonders when he will again find no need for his keys in the morning, puts it this way: "You have to ask who's done this before and who benefits from it. The answer to both questions is the same: the U.S. government. If you look at the scale of death and destruction it's responsible for in Central America, breaking into a few offices is no big deal." □

AN AD MAN'S DREAM

The Making of Gus Hall 1988

MARTIN PEDERSEN

So I tell Gus Hall—who's eyeing another run for President in '88, looking this time out for an ad agency—I say, Gus, you present the ultimate challenge: the orthodox, almost bland-looking extremist. And I think we'd probably have to use that image too. Because revolution, according to the research, does not test well. You say you're not a revolutionary per se? Well, it doesn't matter because that's clearly the perception, and in this business perception is 95 percent of the whole ball game. Now, our job here would be to alter perception or, better still, create it.

Let's say we run a market test on you and the American Communist Party. Maybe it tells us that 39 percent of all white males between the ages of 29 and 47 support your incarceration as a Communist. Another 23 percent favor deportation via Eastern Europe. The remaining have no opinion either way. Gus, our initial job would be to neutralize those significantly negative perceptions. How would we do that? We play off the orthodox image. We present you as a family man, a husband, a father, maybe an occasional churchgoer. In short, a good guy, like Reagan: the guy-next-door-and-something-more. We show you laughing a lot. Do you have an infectious laugh? Can you tell a joke? I see you now, tight shot. You look wise but whimsical. Like everyone's favorite uncle. Maybe you're telling a Will Rogers story about Republicans, Democrats and Big Oil. We're positioning you as a personality: America's Lovable Grump, a sort of Andy Rooney of the left.

Hall mumbles something about how he'd hoped to run an issues-oriented campaign.

Everyone wants to run an issues-oriented campaign, I say, but they just don't translate on the tube. They're static. They're bland. They lack sex appeal. In fact, I don't think you understand the consequences of running on the issues. Strategically it tends to box you in. It's a chancy proposition, and something I advise all my clients against. If you want an effective media campaign you simply have got to give me a big, broad-shouldered theme like the Future, the Past, the Present. Something that sounds like a movie title, or the sequel to one.

All right, he says, the theme is Gus Hall, Communist.

Fine, I say. But be up front about the Communism thing. Disarm the voters by using slogans like "A Communist You Can Get Close To," or "Communism . . . Try It, You'll Like It." Or maybe distance yourself from the Soviet brand: "Communism Without the Barbed Wire."

I see a long establishing shot. You are walking with your wife along the edge of a beautiful lake. We hear church bells chime in the background, dispelling the atheism thing. There's a dog, maybe an Irish setter, and a very young, very blond child who we identify in the copy as one of your twelve or thirteen grandchildren. You talk in flowery terms about your hopes, your dreams, your aspirations for the country. We watch you stop and throw a stick in the water—a man completely at peace with himself. With his world. The dog jumps in the lake and fetches the stick. You put your arm around your lovely wife of thirty-five years. We see you helping your granddaughter take her first steps, while your wife says in the voice-over, "If there's one quality of Gus's that I'd pick over his many, many others, it's his deep love and compassion for people." We pan in slowly on you, your wife. The dog's shaking water off a glistening red coat. You're holding the kid, who's adorable, of course. You say something like, "Together, with your help, we can make a better world, blah, blah, blah." A deep authoritative voice, the voice of God, says, "Gus Hall for President." Then with each word flashing on screen as it's spoken, "Statesman. Husband. Father. Grandfather. Communist." We fade to black, mentioning it, without of course *mentioning* it.

Hall looks stunned.

But in this business, I say, success in one area creates problems in another. It's the proverbial yin and yang of politics. Let's say the first batch of image-builders are successful beyond our wildest expectations. You're no longer Gus who? but Gus Hall, political personality. You're trendy, hip. You've got young urban professionals with demographics *Town and Country* would kill for. They're throwing fund-raising parties for you out in Hollywood. Andy

Martin Pedersen is a writer living in New York City.

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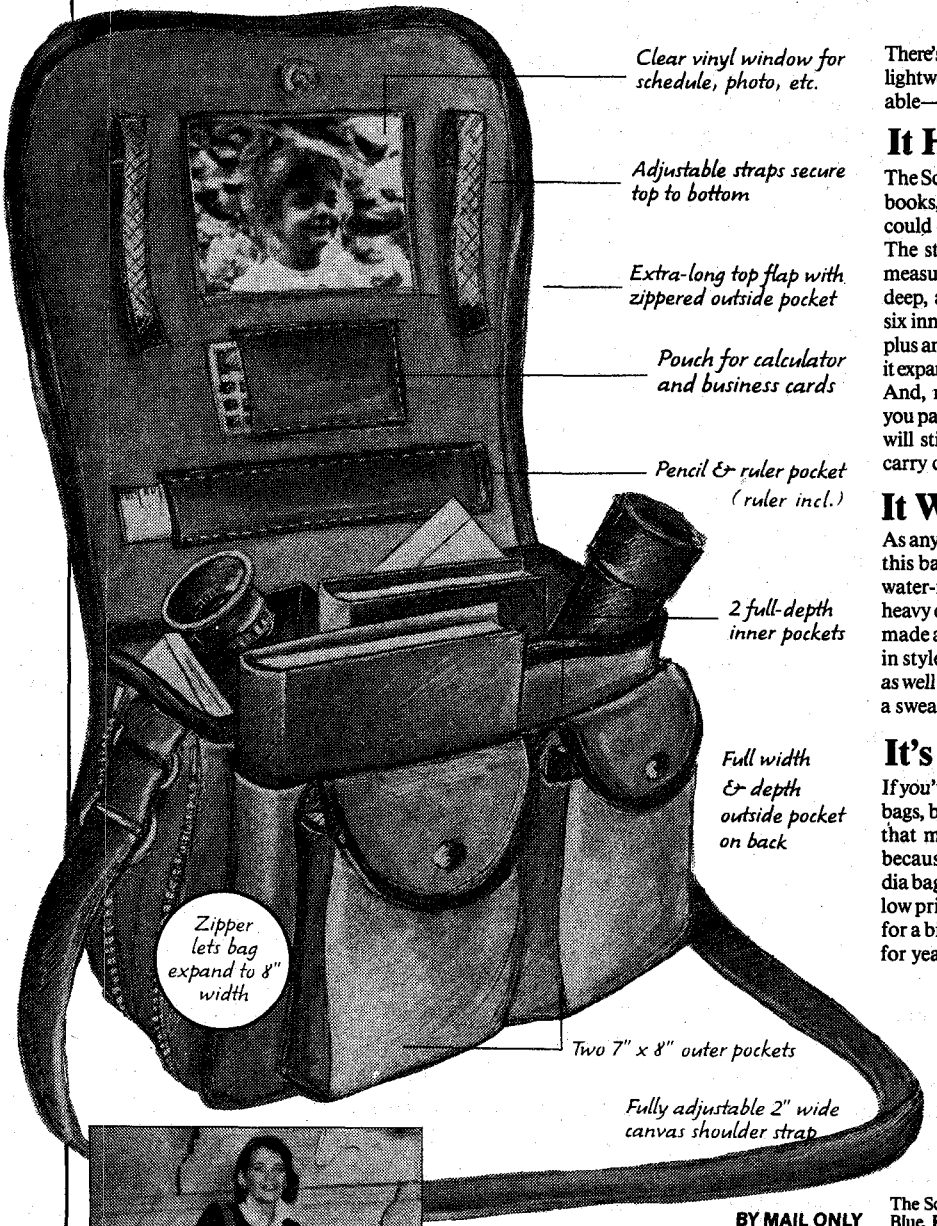
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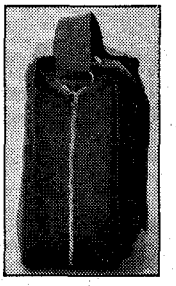

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Warhol declares himself a Communist at the Palladium, calling it "a fun thing to do." Stewy Mott's leaving frantic messages on your telephone answering machine. But then one day they turn. And suddenly it's dump-on-Gus-Hall time! The honeymoon is over. They accuse you of being vague, thin on substance. They say, "Sure he's a nice guy, but where, oh where does he stand on the great issues of the day?" They start throwing that Communist bugaboo back in your face. They air commercials implying that you support the creation of Soviet-style labor camps. They blame you for the invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. They force you to address the issue of what the press now calls Hall's Communist connection. So what do we do now? Gus, we talk issues. Pick an issue, any issue.

How about, Hall says, the nationalization of heavy industry?

O.K., I say. We open on a dreary, nearly deserted steel mill. Shooting in black and white, the mood is grim, dying. We hear an announcer give unemployment statistics. Then suddenly we see you—in full color, of course—a sport jacket slung over one shoulder. You're leading a group of young, vibrant, multicolored workers through the factory gates. Hard-driving rock music swells in the background. "Join Gus Hall," a second announcer says, "and catch the spirit of industrial harmony! Workers training workers for the greatest dance of them all!" They're all dancing now, even the older ones, singing the "Nationalization Jingle," which we'll get a Bruce Springsteentype to write. You walk through the revitalized plant with a slight shuffle to your step—in charge but somehow still above it all. You catch a Frisbee thrown in your direction and shout, "Remember, America, everyone's happy when the workers are boss!" You toss the Frisbee. The workers cheer. They dance and sing—a Dr Pepper kind of spot—then in mid-celebration we go freeze frame. The screen reads: "Dance to a Different Beat. Nationalize With Gus Hall."

Hall clears his throat and says he has an interview at WBAI. He says he'll get back to me, but I can tell by his movements that he's trying to escape, that I'll never see him again.

"Come back," I call out; he's hurrying off. "Come back when you get serious." □

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ALGERIAN–U.S. CONVERGENCE

Time to Settle The Sahara War

BERNARD D. NOSSITER

Tindouf, Algeria

For nearly 3,000 years, Berber and then Arab nomads have roamed the Western Sahara, grazing camels, sheep and goats on the sparse grass and trees of the stony plateau. Even in the late nineteenth century, when Spain, a latecomer to the African land grab, claimed the region as a colony, the Spaniards were largely confined to the coastal villages. The tribes continued to roam the desert freely.

Only a generation ago, the Sahrawis, the Arabic people of the Western Sahara, began to abandon their nomadic life for the Spanish towns, drawn by construction jobs, clinics and schools. After Spain pulled out, Morocco moved in, using French and American fighter bombers, to deprive the Sahrawis of their land and complete the task of sedentarization. Now the only wanderers in the desert are Sahrawi soldiers of the Polisario Front. They travel the length of Morocco's 1,500-mile defensive wall, an astonishing structure of sand, stone and electronic gadgetry which has cut the country in half. The Sahrawis are brave, tenacious and high-spirited fighters, and they have received enough arms from Algeria to make daily assaults on the wall. But their prospects of ejecting Morocco, whose claim to the Western Sahara was dismissed by the World Court ten years ago, are growing dimmer.

The reason is not Morocco's military strength, although thanks to aid from Paris and Washington it is formidable. The prospects of an independent Sahrawi state are probably doomed because of the growing convergence of views between Algeria and the United States, the principal patrons of the combatants.

On the ground, a stalemate of sorts exists. Morocco controls the Western Sahara's northern panhandle and all the inhabited villages and towns. Polisario troops roam freely through the uninhabited desert, lob artillery and mortar shells over the wall and occasionally breach it, withdrawing after a few hours. The much-publicized electronic sensors

Bernard D. Nossiter traveled 600 miles in the Western Sahara with the Polisario army in October. He is completing a book on north-south economic conflict for the Twentieth Century Fund.

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and radar that Morocco installed on the wall are either useless or unused. They spot nothing in the desert, and the guerrillas attack undetected. But there is little evidence that the Polisario's hope of wearing down the Moroccans, of creating enough misery to topple King Hassan II, can be fulfilled. The Moroccans return Polisario fire promptly and in volume and show no sign of being demoralized [see Scott L. Malcomson, "The High Cost of Helping Hassan," *The Nation*, December 22, 1984].

The military deadlock has spurred Algiers and Washington to seek a negotiated solution. Both capitals have an overriding interest in stability in northwest Africa and, for different reasons, think that depends on the King remaining in power. The Algerians do not like Hassan—"intransigent" is their kindest word for him—but he is a known quantity. They fear his overthrow could breed chaos and recklessness, perhaps another Qaddafi or a Khomeini-style fundamentalist. They cannot permit the King to grab the Western Sahara by force because Morocco has claims to the Algerian Sahara. So Algiers supplies the Polisario with enough 23-millimeter cannons, heavy machine guns and 81-millimeter mortars to keep the war going, but it deprives the guerrillas of the tanks and planes they need to break down the wall and perhaps defeat the King.

The United States sees Hassan as a splendid character—or did until he made his bizarre "treaty of union" with Libya last year. He is considered a friendly, pro-Western guardian of one of the Mediterranean's two gates and the rare Arab who eschews anti-Israel vitriol. He gives value received for the $50 million in direct arms aid and $22.5 million in so-called economic support he is getting this year. Hassan has granted U.S. rapid deployment forces staging rights at two bases for assaults on the Persian Gulf.

Washington is furious about Hassan's marriage of convenience to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. Libya wanted the deal to gain a freer hand in Chad and to offset Algeria's dominance in the region, while Hassan initiated it to get Libyan oil dollars and to end Libyan arms shipments to the Polisario. However, Washington is not so angry that it wants the desert war to bring down the monarchy.

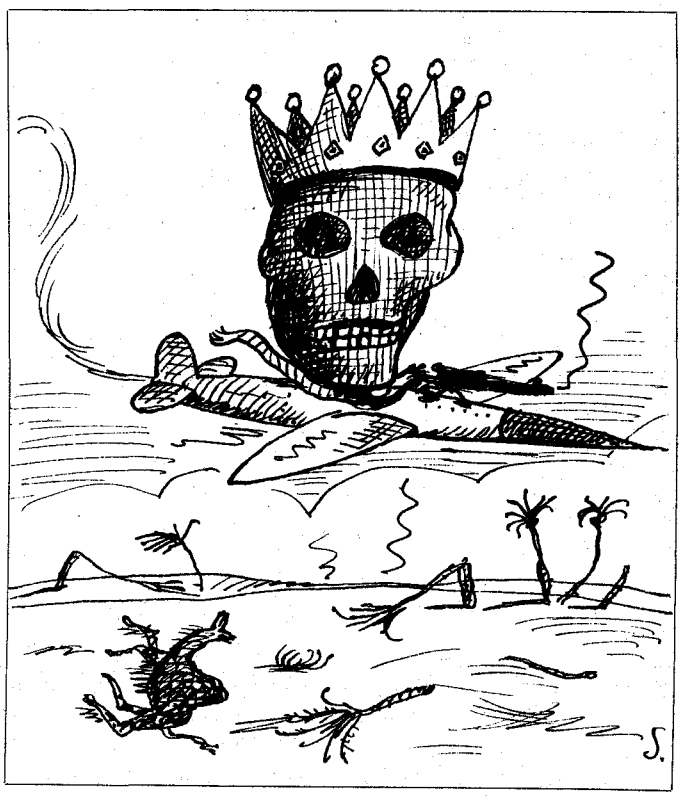
One obvious solution is a confederation giving the Sahrawis a large measure of autonomy—control over schools, health, the economy and local government—and vesting titular sovereignty over the Western Sahara in Rabat. The Algerians insist that the Polisario must negotiate its own fate, that Algiers simply tries to bridge differences. This is a distinction without meaning. In 1983, Algerian President Chadli Benjedid proposed an imprecise autonomy scheme to Hassan. First the King temporized; then he found his new friend in Tripoli. When Algerian and Moroccan leaders talked again through diplomats earlier this year, Hassan rejected any compromise.

The Polisario, which depends on Algeria not only for arms but for food and shelter for perhaps 100,000 Sahrawi women and children in refugee camps in southwest Algeria, has little choice. If Algiers were to strike a deal with the King, the Sahrawis would have to accept it. Hassan has too much choice; his usefulness to Washington and his support in Paris, Libya and from the Saudis, who are always ready with cash for a hard-pressed Arab monarch, give him far more freedom of action.

It is time Washington used some of its leverage to persuade Hassan that he can make an agreement that will leave him covered with glory. Of course, the Reagan Administration fears that a compromise could undermine the King, whose officers twice tried to kill him in the early 1970s. But an unwinnable war has its risks, and duty along the wall is brutal, particularly in the summer and winter. The King has invited the United Nations to conduct a referendum of the Sahrawis under Moroccan control to determine whether they want to remain subjects of the Kingdom. Since any vote would take place under Hassan's guns and the ballots would be counted by Hassan's officials, the United Nations has sensibly ignored this offer. At the very minimum, Washington should persuade the King to abandon such transparent attempts to legitimize his land grab and urge him to concentrate on negotiations.

Almost everywhere else in the world the Polisario has won diplomatic support. Sixty-three nations recognize its putative state. The Organization of African Unity and the U.N. General Assembly have called for direct Morocco-Polisario talks and an uncoerced referendum of the Sahrawi people. That is an eminently sensible idea, but it ignores the real balance of power and the enormous prestige Hassan has invested in the Sahara campaign. He will talk to Algerians and Americans but not to the Polisario, not even to exchange his own prisoners, some of whom have been in captivity since 1976.

Washington is not overly troubled by the war, largely because the Soviet Union, a big customer for Moroccan phosphate, has been almost invisible in the region. Most



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Alexander Cockburn on the PRESS.
Andrew Kopkind on the CULTURE WARS.
Stephen F. Cohen on the SOVIET UNION.
Arthur C. Danto on ART.
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Algerian and hence Polisario weapons come from Moscow, but they are sold to Algiers to use as it sees fit, not to support the Sahrawis. But if the United States did understand its stake in Moroccan stability, it would lean more heavily on the King to compromise. □

THE SILENT EPIDEMIC

Lead Poisoning—Still a Scourge

ALBERT L. HUEBNER

In 1971 the American Academy of Pediatrics stated officially what had become obvious to many of its members much earlier: "Lead poisoning in childhood is a preventable disease." Congress and government agencies responded to the academy's call for removing excess lead from the environment and for finding and treating children who already had dangerous amounts of lead in their bodies. Yet fifteen years later, lead poisoning is a serious childhood disease.

While death, blindness or severe mental retardation from lead rarely occur these days, lead poisoning in children is more widespread and more subtly destructive than anyone thought in 1971. The most recent figures, contained in a comprehensive survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics in 1976-80, showed that 780,000 children under age 6—about 4 percent of the nation's kids—had unsafe blood lead levels. Since then, the official "toxicity alert level," at which medical attention is required, has been revised downward, so the number of children at risk is considerably higher than the health service estimated.

The damage done to this large group of children is enormous. Recent findings cited by the Environmental Protection Agency indicate that even "safe" lead concentrations interfere with vitamin D metabolism and blood chemistry. Earlier research established that low levels of lead in children's blood can cause hyperactivity, learning difficulties and an extensive range of behavioral problems—disabilities that are likely to plague victims for a lifetime.

Although food and drinking water may contain the toxic metal, the major sources of the lead that ends up in children's bodies are paint and automobile exhaust. The danger of the fumes was demonstrated, ironically, by attempts to protect machinery. When cars began using catalytic converters, most owners followed manufacturers' instructions to use unleaded fuel, which is needed to keep the converters working properly. Vernon Houk, director of the Center for Environmental Health, monitored lead levels in children in sixty major cities and found a decrease from 1976 to 1980 that corresponded closely to the reduction in use of leaded

Albert L. Huebner teaches physics at California State University and has written widely on lead poisoning.

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gasoline during that period. Houk thinks that leaded gas contributed about 20 percent of the lead measured in the blood of those children with dangerous concentrations.

Despite this inadvertent reduction, it wasn't until 1980—eight years after the E.P.A. first proposed regulations aimed at decreasing the amount of lead in gasoline blends—that a standard went into effect. But the next year, the National Petroleum Refiners Association asked Vice President George Bush's special task force on regulatory relief to abolish it. Bush, a former oil man, apparently liked the idea and lobbied then-E.P.A. administrator Anne Gorsuch Burford. An all-out attack by physicians, scientists and public health officials forced the E.P.A. to maintain the standard, despite Gorsuch's desire to dismantle it.

Malnourished children, deficient in iron or calcium, absorb lead that gets into their bodies more thoroughly and suffer a greater impact than well-fed kids. So it is significant that at about the same time that the E.P.A. was trying to thwart lead reduction in gasoline, the Reagan Administration gutted food supplement programs for the poor. A study done for the Washington-based Urban Institute showed that child nutrition programs were slashed by more than 30 percent in the first years of the Administration.

Back when the American Academy of Pediatrics took its stand, paint was believed to be the chief source of lead poisoning, but the elimination of leaded paint has taken even longer than the removal of leaded gasoline. In 1971 Congress passed the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act, which provided for the detection and treatment of lead poisoning in children and the removal of lead hazards from buildings. However, the Nixon and subsequent Administrations blocked implementation, and Congress itself appropriated only a small fraction of the money needed to make some headway.

Since passage of the act, millions of children have been screened for lead poisoning and tens of thousands have been treated, although Reagan cut funding for such programs during his first term. Nevertheless, little has been done to remove leaded paint from dwellings, and the cured child frequently returns to the conditions that caused the poisoning. There is an additional complication: the treatment uses a chelating agent that increases the body's absorption of lead and accelerates poisoning if the child goes back to a lead-polluted environment.

Houk estimates that as many as 40 million dwellings have walls coated with leaded paint. In addition, the widespread use of this paint before 1950 has left toxic levels of lead from demolished buildings and flaked-off paint in the soil of many communities. Richard Rabin of the Boston Office of Environmental Affairs reports that average lead concentration in the soil of that city is near the danger level, and amounts three times the so-called safe limit are common in some areas. Even higher concentrations have been reported in Hartford and Baltimore. Kids who play in this soil and then touch their mouths absorb dangerous amounts of the deadly metal.

The link to nutrition, as well as to the heavy traffic and dilapidated housing found in poor neighborhoods, explains the strong socioeconomic bias of lead poisoning revealed in the health center survey. Children from families with annual incomes under $6,000 are substantially more prone to lead poisoning than those from families with incomes over $15,000; black children are six times as likely to be poisoned as white children.

In an article about childhood lead poisoning in *The Nation* for March 4, 1978, I expressed the hope that increasing public awareness would lead to elimination of this silent epidemic. The time is long overdue. □

God Bless You

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

fingers in their ears. And what I ask you to endure so briefly now is what the selfless members of the pornography commission do day after day for the good of our children. I am simply going to dip you in filth, then pull you out and wash you off immediately. At terrible risk of infection, they have to wallow in pornography. They are so fearless. We might think of them as sort of sewer astronauts. All right. Everybody ready? Here we go:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

That disgusting, godless loop of kiddie porn, friends and neighbors, happens to be a basic law of this country. How could this have happened? Some pederastic Congressman, while we weren't watching, must have tacked it onto the Rivers and Harbors bill. It should be expunged with all possible haste, in order that children may be safe again.

Adolf Hitler blamed the Jews for inspiring every sort of sexual ugliness in Germany, so he tried to kill them all. Say what you like about him, incidentally, it can't be denied that he led an exceedingly clean life sexually. In the end, he made an honest woman of his only sexual partner, Eva Braun. And it was simply an invention of British propaganda that he had only one ball.

Hitler was wrong about the Jews. It is unclean images that are responsible for unclean sexuality. In order to protect German children, all he had to do was get rid of unclean images, which is what more and more good Americans now propose we do. Before we can do that, though, we must get rid of the First Amendment. In no way can this be interpreted as an anti-Semitic act. The authors of that Amendment, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, were not Jews.

It is not enough that sex crimes of every sort are already against the law and are punished with admirable severity. It

Kurt Vonnegut's latest novel is Galapagos *(Dell). This statement was made at a press conference sponsored by the National Coalition Against Censorship, held in New York City on January 16.*

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is up to our leaders, and particularly our Attorney General, to persuade a large part of our citizenry that even the most awful sex crimes are made legal, and even celebrated in some godless quarters, because of the permissiveness of our Constitution. Only then will an aroused citizenry rise up in righteous wrath to smash the First Amendment—and many other only slightly less offensive parts of the Bill of Rights.

Once the findings of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography are published for all to see, whether they can read or not, what sort of American would dare to defend liberty, whose cost is so horrible? I'll tell you what kind of an American, friends and neighbors: the sort of American who would rape a 3-year-old girl, drench her in lighter fluid, set her ablaze, and throw her off a fire escape.

As we used to say in geometry class back in public school when I was a boy: "Q.E.D.—*quod erat demonstrandum.*" I thank you for your attention. □

LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 66*)
guns fired by the British Army of occupation. Not a word about the unnecessary and demeaning strip searches of female political prisoners in Armagh Women's Prison. . . .

The one great truth in the article is that Prime Ministers Garret FitzGerald and Margaret Thatcher got together to sign the Anglo-Irish treaty, such as it is, because "the sharp swing by Ulster's frustrated Catholics to Sinn Fein, the I.R.A.'s political front, may have convinced her [Thatcher] to take a second look." The unhappy truth is that for sixty years the northern Catholics, abandoned by their brothers and sisters in the south, have appealed to all sides to hear their cries, with none responding except London's civil liberties societies and the confused and "sentimental" Irish-Americans. It was not an appeal to decency or morality that brought these two Prime Ministers to Hillsborough, and unless the British and Irish governments address the discrimination in housing and employment and the appalling child mortality rate, there will be no more lasting peace in Northern Ireland than there will be in South Africa where, too, the people's patience has run out. *Paul O'Dwyer*

NOSSITER REPLIES

New York City
My friend Paul O'Dwyer is a man of courage, integrity and intelligence; he is wrong about the I.R.A. When the Provisional I.R.A. was hatched fifteen years ago to revive the bomb and gun in Ireland, it was run on authoritarian lines by a narrow inner circle responsible to no one. That structure is unchanged today. The Provisionals punish dissidence inside and outside their ranks with a sadistic shot in the kneecap, crippling victims for life. This technique enables the I.R.A. to frighten and extort money from shopkeepers and other Catholic citizens. The I.R.A. aims at forcing, at gunpoint, Ulster's 1 million Protestants into an unwanted union with the republic in the south.

For more than ten years, Catholics in Ulster ghettos firmly rejected pleas by the I.R.A. to boycott elections. More recently, these Catholics have voted in increasing numbers for I.R.A. candidates because peaceful reform of Catholic disabilities has been blocked by privileged Protestant workers and a supine government in London. The I.R.A., however, refuses to permit its members elected to legislatures to take their seats, a striking contempt for the parliamentary process. The I.R.A. has renounced its guerrilla status by shifting from hard targets and soldiers to the indiscriminate killing of civilians of both faiths. If the I.R.A. achieves its stated goal and seizes power in the republic, it will replace a government that generally respects the Western catalogue of civil liberties. The I.R.A. will destroy a system in which governments are changed in an orderly fashion through the ballot box. In sum, the I.R.A. is a totalitarian movement and menaces the republic's democracy, no matter how flawed. *Bernard D. Nossiter*

CENTER OF ATTENTION

New York City
In reference to your editorial box in the issue of December 28/January 4:

Please try to remember, we think it a snub
To refer to our center as some kind of club.
A club is for drinking, or pool, or a chat,
But PEN is a bit more—well, lively—than that.
The Colony, Friars, Collectors, Explorers,
Cornell, Salmagundi, the Lotos, the Florists,
Flotilla, Sierra, the Century, the Lions,
And even the Polish Men Singers Alliance—
Those are the clubs here, and everyone's got one,
But try to remember that PEN just is *not* one.
PEN is a center, a focus, a hub,
A pivot, a nexus, but, please, not a club.
We ask you, revising your style sheet, to enter
Our *proper* "PEN name": PEN American Center.

Kirkpatrick Sale, treasurer
PEN American Center

HOUSEKEEPING

Niles, Ill.
Concerning the "Addendum" in the issue of December 14, which discusses grants made by the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation: It is true that we gave a grant to The Nation Institute "to support their 'Justice Watch' project, which will monitor and investigate activities and policies of the Federal government, especially the U.S. Justice Department, concerning civil liberties, constitutional rights and social justice." It is not true, however, that we gave two grants to the Funding Exchange. We gave only one grant, in May 1983, which was specifically "for the use of their Latin American Fund to protect and promote human rights in Honduras."

Lance E. Lindblom, president
J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation

We appreciate the clarification. So that there be no further misunderstanding, we should perhaps underline the fact that the grants from the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, the so-called Little MacArthur Foundation, had nothing to do with the funding of Jamie Kitman's recent three-part exposé of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. *The Editors*

GET HOLD OF YOURSELF, COCKBURN

New York City
I have long admired *The Nation* for both its courage and its veracity, and in the past I have read Alexander Cockburn with more pleasure than irritation. However, in "Beat the Devil" for December 14, he appears to have lost hold of himself completely.

First, his attack on Bill Moyers. How many people can Cockburn name, from the entire American press, who match Moyers in guts and sanity or in the ability to stand on the side of the angels in this lunatic moment of history? Beat the devil, not your friends.

Second, his attack on the New York Public Library and its supporters is utterly without merit and woven out of snide half-truths. The library is alive and vital because men and women of this city have put up the money to keep it so. Give them credit. A library is the heartbeat of civilization.

Third, his description of the Metropolitan

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Museum of Art proves only that he has never visited it. If he had, he would have noticed the thousands of children being taken through its galleries day after day, not to mention the adults—millions each year—in the most widely visited museum in the world, including the Soviet Union, Mr. Cockburn. If Ronald Reagan is the deplorable tragedy of our time, an enemy of culture and civilization, then be good enough to admit that the Met is one of our crowning jewels.

And last, the small, childish item on the Cro-Magnon and the Neanderthal insults the intelligence of anyone with even a cursory knowledge of prehistory.

For shame, Cockburn. It ill becomes you. You are splendid when you blast the enemies of mankind. But distinguish them from the friends. *Howard Fast*

COCKBURN REPLIES

New York City

It's sad though accurate testimony to our shriveling political culture that Bill Moyers is held to be the best the liberals have got and therefore he should be spared criticism. On many important occasions Moyers has been awful, never more egregiously than during the invasion of Grenada and at the Geneva summit, where his commentary for CBS on the meeting between Jesse Jackson and Mikhail Gorbachev was a particularly memorable piece of cold war–mongering, entirely indistinguishable from the standard-issue claptrap of George Will and the others. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

In the case of the New York Public Library and the Metropolitan Museum, my point concerned the corruption of cultural values. Take an example from the other side of Central Park: the front of the Natural History Museum is currently adorned with a banner invoking the space shuttle and giving thanks to Mobil Oil. It would take the pen of Marcel Proust to describe the metastasis of conspicuous "charity" in New York City as a vehicle for social self-promotion. The limousines roll toward the charity balls over the bodies of the homeless and even the Rohatyns have said things are getting out of hand. I'm glad that Mrs. Vincent Astor's foundation helps sustain the New York Public Library, just as I was glad to see the Anschutz Collection brought to the Museum of Natural History courtesy of Mobil. But this doesn't mean that I agree with Ronald Reagan that noblesse oblige and tax deductible contributions should be the motors of our culture. There's a coarseness and vulgarity about the Metropolitan Museum these days that I find depressing, but that's a longer story. Millions of children and adults go to Disney World too, another crowning jewel of American civilization.

So far as prehistory is concerned, Fast's remarks suggest that he is out of touch with modern scholarship. Perhaps he still relies on the discredited hypothesis of Marcellin Boule, who libeled Homo sapiens neanderthalensis on the basis of one skeleton disfigured by arthritis. The disappearance of the Neanderthals is one of the great mysteries of prehistory. The suggestion that they were lured to extinction by the false charms of neotenic Cro-Magnons, malign behind the lineaments of innocence, has been made by Bjorn Kurten, of the University of Helsinki, a man hailed by Stephen Jay Gould as "unquestionably Europe's finest evolutionary paleontologist." Gould's praise may be found in his introduction to the translation of Kurten's book *Dance of the Tiger*, published by Pantheon in 1980. This novel, to which Kurten adds a scholarly comment, is his "model" to explain the Neanderthals' disappearance. There are Neanderthal characteristics—care for the aged and infirm—offered by Kurten on the basis of paleontological evidence, but the overall model, which Gould says is based on "scrupulously accurate science," can neither be proved nor disproved. I prefer its vision, honoring the matriarchal Neanderthals against the phallocratic Cro-Magnons, to the other vision—which Fast maybe prefers—of the *Untermensch* overwhelmed by Progress and racial superiority. *Alexander Cockburn*

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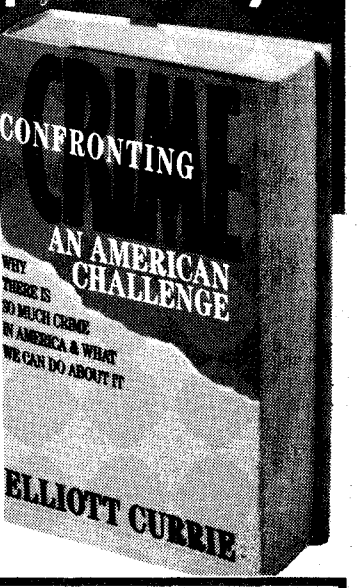

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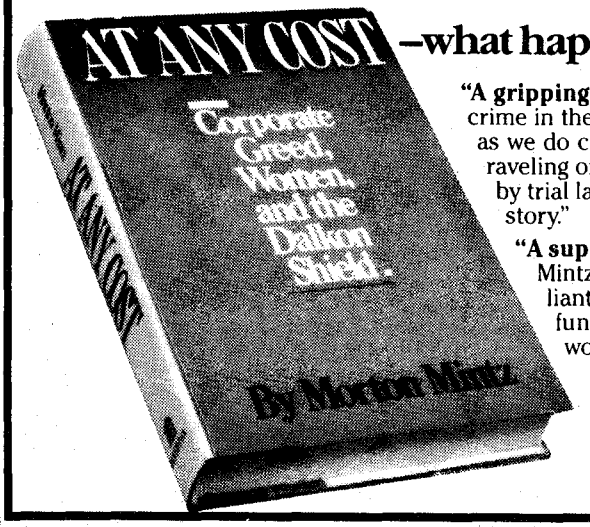

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Seeing Is Believing

GEORGE PACKER

MOVE YOUR SHADOW: South Africa, Black and White. *By Joseph Lelyveld. Times Books. 390 pp. $18.95.*

Joseph Lelyveld begins his book with two epigraphs. The first is a series of phrasebook commands for black caddies serving white golfers, and gives *Move Your Shadow* its resonant title. The second, from Herman Charles Bosman's *Mafeking Road*, bears on the purpose, technique and vision of the book: "I can tell you the things that happened as I saw them, and what the rest were about only Africa knows."

The idea of seeing—blacks and whites looking at each other and at themselves, the journalist observing and interpreting both, the American public trying to make sense of it all—runs through every chapter of *Move Your Shadow*. Near the end of the book Lelyveld makes it explicit: "Beyond all the fatuous theorizing and scenarios, there is the reality of what actually happens, day after day. Those I admired most, blacks and whites, were those who really looked." But there are two different kinds of looking: the glimpse snatched "to draw support for some tribal suspicion or inherited fear," and the harder effort of those who, "in stepping across a forbidden frontier, managed to shed their armor and arguments and take in the larger truth." It is this second kind of looking that Lelyveld came to admire most in his three years as the *New York Times* correspondent in Johannesburg.

We can admire Lelyveld for the same reason. Unlike other recent books on South Africa, *Move Your Shadow* is not political science, anthropology, autobiography, or clarion call. It justifies itself only by how clearly Lelyveld sees "the reality of South Africa as it is." There is no advocacy apart from a sustained tone of cool ironic anger; no prophecy beyond one three-word sentence, "Plenty of conflict." "I was not licensed as a seer," Lelyveld warns the reader who wants a timetable of the revolution, who wants to escape the South African present by talking about the South African future.

Lelyveld offers no such comfort. In remaining true to his commitment to describe "the things that happened as I saw them," he writes most compellingly not of famous people like Steve Biko or Nelson Mandela, whom he couldn't know, but of the people he came to know well: an Afrikaner farmer in Zimbabwe trying to accept the fact of black power; a black activist troubled by the problem of evil and "the role of God in this situation"; Philip Kgosana in exile musing bitterly on his experience over two decades; Major Johannes van der Linde justifying himself to the people of New York City. Some readers, on both the left and the right, will close this book angry or frustrated; but perhaps the "moderates," who hold out hope for compromise and peaceful resolution, will be the most disappointed. *Move Your Shadow* is a pessimistic book, and part of its pessimism comes from Lelyveld's unwillingness to serve up anything but what he calls "the place itself, its actual workings, its here and now."

What did Lelyveld see? To begin with he had the advantage of historical perspective, for he had already done a stint as South African bureau chief in 1965-66 that was cut short by an order from Pretoria to leave. On his return, in 1980, he found that reform was in the air, and whites persistently asked him in an optimistic tone, Do you see the changes? His answer, which he hedged for months, eventually came out in Cape Town at lunch with an Afrikaner: "Yes, I never imagined they would be able to carry apartheid so far." He acknowledges that "on the level of perception and expression . . . something had definitely slipped loose, but whatever it was, it wasn't political power."

Instead of reform, what Lelyveld saw was the bus that black workers resettled in KwaNdebele ride 190 miles a day to and from their jobs in Pretoria; he saw the squatters outside Cape Town in their plastic-bag dwellings singing hymns and waiting for the police; he saw Ekuvukeni, a cluster of metal sheds and outhouses for 20,000 people created by legal writ in a remote spot of KwaZulu. The moral center of the book lies in such observations, which are especially intense in the three chapters on influx control and the homelands. Anyone who argues that something called reform has taken place in the past decade must look at Qwaqwa or at the legislated despair of Transkei. In South Africa, Third World poverty and malnourishment are the results of careful planning by white bureaucrats. Lelyveld's exhaustive exploration of the homelands allows him to refute the idea of reform, its American cousin, constructive engagement, and the

> trusting or willfully blind acceptance of the assurances of change and reform that are offered wholesale to visitors like [Assistant Secretary of State] Chester Crocker. . . . This [acceptance] depended on not seeing what was going on in places like KwaNdebele and Ciskei.

The most naïve Americans have been those "pragmatic" conservatives who have sought gradual change in South Africa. For their money they have got a bogus reform that allows mixed couples to marry but not to live together, an escalation of violence and the perception in Africa and throughout the world that the United States is apartheid's last best hope.

But Lelyveld doesn't offer much in the way of hope to supporters of the resistance either. Because they are fond of a false analogy between their country and South Africa, Americans tend to misconstrue the conflict: "We saw Jim Crow go away, so why can't apartheid?" When Lelyveld interviewed Andrew Young on his appointment as U.N. Ambassador, Young expressed confidence that the Carter Administration could bring about majority rule within four years. Instead, South Africa has flown in the face of all our assumptions about progress. While the condition of blacks has steadily worsened, Lelyveld finds that white repression and black fears of being co-opted have caused "a drastic split in black politics between the acceptable political style and the available means." They won't parley, and they have no guns. After seventy years, he reports, the African National Congress "has little to celebrate beyond

George Packer has lived in Africa. His essays have appeared in Dissent, The Boston Review *and elsewhere.*

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its survival." And he is even more skeptical about the moderate white businessmen, "instigators of 'change,'" who have recently received attention in the American press. His portraits of the courageous, self-liberated blacks and whites in the chapter "Pilgrims," though moving, seem entirely cut off from the misery and anger of the rest of the book; they pass like a vision of saints amidst the dreary and terrifying reality of apartheid.

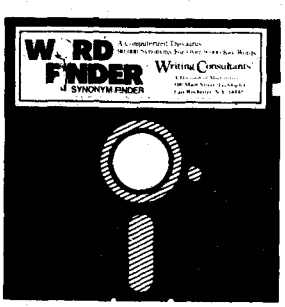
A faint note of hope is sounded in the final chapter, but even this is based on nothing more substantial than the reflection

> that most individuals, white and black, were basically sane, that they could rise above their inheritance or, at least, adapt it when left with no other choice; that, finally, it was the inheritance and the situation it produced that were deranged.

Lelyveld also finds isolated instances of sanity in the new Zimbabwe; and it is in Zimbabwe that he closes, in the railyard at Bulawayo, where the corpses of the Ndebele massacred by rival Shona soldiers lie stacked in refrigerated boxcars. The final, ironic tableau is that of a white Zimbabwean leading his two sons into the first car. Seeing him, Lelyveld is sickened by the thought that the man has come to educate his sons in his own grim racism. But when they talk, he learns the man had another lesson in mind for the boys: "Kids is cruel, kids is cruel really. . . . To them it's just a lot of dead kaffirs. I bring my sons here to see firsthand what they are speaking. I don't want them to speak secondhand." The man has the wisdom Lelyveld admires, the capacity to "shed [his] armor and arguments and take in the larger truth." So we are left with a boxcar of mutilated corpses and the effort to see.

Lelyveld's tour fell in the years between the Soweto uprisings of the mid-1970s and the nationwide revolt that began in late 1984. He had a period of relative calm in which to see the country as something larger and more permanent than a series of violent spasms. The mood in *Move Your Shadow* is one of stasis, a mood shot through with tension, fear and exhaustion but neither apocalyptic nor ominous. The image of an unemployed man walking down a dusty road in Transkei stands out; there are no cops lashing protesters with *sjamboks*, no A.N.C. land mines. Nothing in the book suggests the events of

WHO KILLED ROGET?



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the last fifteen months; you couldn't guess that within a year of Lelyveld's departure the country would blow up. For all his keenness of vision, he doesn't prepare us for the South Africa we read about today, and so he seems to miss the mark in a fundamental way.

There are a number of possible explanations for this shortsightedness, if that's what it is. Perhaps the distortion is ours: restricted to newspaper and television accounts, we get only the flashpoints. To us South Africa is "Six More Blacks Killed," "Thousands March in Durban," just as black Africa is only *coups d'état* and mass famine. It is possible that the farther you get from South Africa, the more cataclysmic it looks: to some whites there the revolt undoubtedly seems unreal, and more so still to the millions of blacks corralled in the homelands.

Or it's possible that no one could have predicted the magnitude of the current upheaval. Lelyveld is cutting about the benefits of hindsight: "Claiming foreknowledge, [blacks and whites] would ask, 'What took "it" so long?'" But the fact is that Lelyveld's refusal to indulge in forecasts of revolution may have kept him from seeing what was in front of his nose. Even in his one forward-looking chapter, "W-A-R?" his attention is confined to the exiled A.N.C., its change in tactics, its use of violence. There is no sign of the internal movements that have recently become so important; except in isolated cases of resistance, the internal struggle hardly seems to exist. Lelyveld expresses his skepticism about it by his use of quotation marks around the words "movement" and "struggle."

"What the rest were about," says the second half of Bosman's epigraph, "only Africa knows." In *Move Your Shadow* the theme that runs parallel to seeing is ignorance: not just the appalling ignorance of whites about black misery but Lelyveld's, or any outsider's, inevitable confusion. He writes of misinterpreting appearances, of being sated with "paradox," even of the harsh glare of "all that moral clarity." When Malusi Mpumlwana tells him of his torture in prison and of how he left jail with a spiritual conviction that even his interrogators were God's people and must be saved, Lelyveld reflects: "I have to acknowledge that the meaning of his words, as I heard them in my living room in Johannesburg and as I think about them now, was and is beyond me."

He is talking both about the difficulty of knowing another man with such disparate experiences and about the difficulty of understanding a culture as foreign and complex as South Africa's. The humility that comes with this awareness allows Lelyveld to see as much as he does. If he had been quicker to guess at what would happen in 1984 or 1985, he probably wouldn't have written the magnificent book he has.

Lelyveld's lack of prescience should be an example to less careful and informed observers. The problem of writing about a place as remote as Africa and getting it right is more than academic. Events on that continent come at us like intermittent dispatches from a distant front where a pointless war is being fought. No causes, no connections, no pattern. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Mali and Burkina Faso are bombing each other over a disputed strip of border (and our experts were quite sure they had no military aircraft); Nigeria's four-year-old civilian government is toppled one New Year's Eve and our hope for African democracy seems to vanish without a trace. Who in the West predicted Robert Mugabe's victory in 1980, or the Shona-Ndebele massacres that followed? Even the little that we think we know from news reports can badly mislead, since sources are usually limited to the higher levels of African regimes and Western embassies. On a recent trip to West Africa, for example, I expected to hear talk of the South African crisis in every bar, given the official attention it receives. But in capitals and the countryside, among intellectuals as well as peasants, South Africa wasn't mentioned once. When I asked about it, Africans patiently explained that they had too many problems of their own to spend much time solving the problems of their brothers down south.

We assume it's different for us. We have plenty of time for South Africa, and we seem to know it so much better than we know the countries on the other side of the Limpopo. After all, as Chester Crocker said, South Africa is "part of us." Events there make all too much sense. In fact, we have a special understanding of them because of our own racial conflicts. Can there be any question of our getting it right?

Lelyveld describes apartheid as a screen on which "whites can project any version of reality they please, including their own fantasies of life in a society where apartheid does not exist." Is this a danger for us too? And does our assumption of easy familiarity make such foolishness all the more likely? When Andrew Young says of former Prime Minister John Vorster, "I get along with those kind of folks" and Crocker calls the top military brass "a lobby of modernizing patriots," they are making just this mistake of seeing South Africa as the projected shadow of their own experience. Young seems to be saying, I learned to talk with whites like that in Atlanta. (President Carter often implied his southern Africa policy would work because of his own Southern background.) Crocker is transferring his faith in the American military elite to an army that specializes in cross-border raids and the occupation of its own cities.

The right is duped by talk of reform when it's couched in the familiar jargon of the social sciences and corporate boardrooms. The left clings to the spectacle of mass protests, so reminiscent of our own struggle against unjust laws and an unjust war. But the bedrock issue, as Lelyveld reminds us, is not "human rights and living standards" but power, and majority rule must mean the end of white power. It isn't a question of signing civil rights laws and sending children to school together, as here; nor can the oppressive minority go home, as the French in Algeria or the Portuguese in Angola did. So a voice like Desmond Tutu's becomes hoarse with pleading, and the most acute words are Winnie Mandela's when she warns, "Too much harm has been done. We have been driven too far apart."

In seeing South Africa as "part of us," we risk taming the shadow on the screen to a point where the reality can only defy our expectations. Such myopia has already left our government with one policy in shambles and nothing to take its place. Recent events like the widespread murder of "collaborators" and the Zulu-Pondo clashes that killed scores don't fit any picture that our advocates of black rule have been able to project. Because they make us uncomfortable and unsure, we leave these facts out of most of our discussions. Of course, white South Africans and the American right smugly point to such tragedies as proof that black rule will mean death and ruin, conveniently ignoring the obvious truth that it is apart-

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heid that pits not just race against race but tribe against tribe. They welcomed Idi Amin as further proof of what a black ruler would do, while omitting such brighter names as Nyerere and Senghor from their litany of African horrors. But in forcing themselves to ignore the troubling aspects of the crisis, supporters of the struggle begin to miss the mark. Funeral marches get our blood up, but tribal clashes belong to the second half of Lelyveld's epigraph—to what Africa knows and we do not. And so they slip from memory, into the increasingly murky future.

If "really looking" at South Africa means anything, it means looking at the things that don't fit our ideas. A first step is to remember that South Africa is more part of Africa than part of us, to concede its reality apart from our obsessions, to begin to fill in our ignorance about its continent. Really looking may be as simple as forcing ourselves to assume that we *don't* understand South Africa. *Move Your Shadow* contributes very little to the theoretical discussion; it doesn't advocate an American position or point a way out; and part of it has already been outdated by events. But in its insight and sensitivity to "the reality of what actually happens, day after day," Joseph Lelyveld's book is the best place I know of to begin to look. □

Out of Africa

HOLLY SKLAR

You can't read an embargo document through a gold coin.
—South African saying

As late as August 1985, President Reagan was calling the South African regime "reformist" and spinning tall tales of "substantial changes" to validate his policy of "constructive engagement." In September, under mounting public and Congressional pressure, U.S. policy shifted with an executive order outlining economic sanctions. However weak on paper and weaker in practice, the sanctions register U.S. dissatisfaction with Pretoria's apparent inability to find a less volatile mix of reform and repression.

Since the award of the Nobel Prize to Bishop Desmond Tutu and the launching of the Free South Africa Movement in the fall of 1984, antiapartheid protest has grown throughout the United States, and South Africa has become a major media story. (*People* named imprisoned African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela one of "the 25 most intriguing people of '85.") On the campuses, apartheid has become the dominant focus of student mobilization. At least fifty-five colleges and universities, nine states and twenty-five cities have taken some form of divestment action.

Fortune summed up the corporate view of divestment in a September 30, 1985, cover story, "Time to Quit South Africa?": "Thirteen U.S. companies have pulled out this year. The 300 that remain are under political and economic pressure to leave—but most see good reasons to stay." Nowadays corporate executives proclaim their abhorrence of apartheid and focus on their professed benevolence toward blacks as a good reason to stay. But a look back to a July 1972 *Fortune* story gives a clearer portrait of the corporate Camelot in South Africa:

> South Africa has always been regarded by foreign investors as a gold mine, one of those rare and refreshing places where profits are great and problems are small. Capital is not threatened by political instability or nationalization. Labor is cheap, the market booming, the currency hard and convertible.

Rebellion in South Africa and solidarity abroad are exposing the bankruptcy of the apartheid gold mine. The following resources are valuable tools for understanding and dismantling U.S. support for apartheid, both public and private.

In Whose Interest?: A Guide to U.S.-South Africa Relations, by Kevin Danaher (Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C., 1984, $11.95), is a concise overview of U.S. relations with South Africa and political developments in that country. Danaher, an issues analyst for the Institute for Food and Development Policy in San Francisco, has included an extensive chronology of events from 1974 to 1984, an annotated bibliography and a directory of information sources.

Danaher argues that the constitutional and labor policy reforms of the Botha regime "are neither a dismantling of apartheid" nor "'cosmetic' changes." They were designed to:

> 1) gain better control over the African workforce, by cultivating more skilled workers while keeping the majority locked up in the rural labor reserves ("bantustans"), 2) create class cleavages in the African community, by giving black businessmen and industrial workers some economic and social privileges while keeping the black masses in a state of abject poverty, and 3) upgrade the state security apparatus, giving it a greater role in general policymaking.

Similarly, U.S. corporations, and their much-vaunted voluntary code of conduct, the Sullivan Principles, cannot be seen as a "progressive force" in South Africa:

> A fundamental misconception underlying the progressive force theme is that apartheid is a system of racial separation or segregation. . . . The apartheid system, however, is designed not for separation, but domination . . . [over black workers]. The history of South African development shows that modifications in the system of white supremacy were brought about by changing needs for black labor, not by white attitudes toward racial segregation.

Danaher argues that U.S. support of "peaceful change" in South Africa is hypocritical and unrealistic since, in the words of A.N.C. president Oliver Tambo, "The [apartheid] system itself is an act of violence." The A.N.C. worked nonviolently from its formation in 1912 until 1960, when the South African police massacred sixty-seven unarmed protesters at Sharpeville and the organization was declared illegal; in 1961, A.N.C. President Albert Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Danaher also analyzes the "Communist threat" as perceived by Pretoria and the Carter and Reagan Administrations, though I wish his section "The Cape Sea Route and Strategic Minerals" was stronger. Conservatives argue, among other things, that a black-ruled South Africa would cut critical mineral exports to the United States and serve as a base for Soviet subversion of the oil-shipping lanes around the Cape. Danaher refutes the first point more effectively than the second. A Soviet blockade of Cape sea lanes is extremely unlikely,

Holly Sklar is the author of Reagan, Trilateralism and the Neoliberals: Containment and Intervention in the 1980s, *forthcoming from South End Press.*

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and would be treated as an act of war by the United States. The allegiance of South Africa itself would matter little; if diplomacy failed, the conflict would escalate globally from a conventional to a nuclear confrontation long before oil stores were depleted. But the scenario of a long conventional superpower war, in which oil supply is a major factor, is used to justify a global U.S. military presence. The same "Soviet threat to the sea lanes" argument is used to rationalize U.S. intervention in the Caribbean and Central America.

In Whose Interest? points out important domestic connections with apartheid, such as the links between plant closings in the United States and industrial investment and bank loans for South Africa. Danaher is also an author of one of the best resources on the ties between American and South African workers, *American Steel Jobs and South Africa*, a four-page pamphlet produced in September 1984 by the United Steelworkers of America and the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund. It shows how U.S. corporations and banks aided the South African government-owned Iron and Steel Corporation while they were divesting from steel in Youngstown and elsewhere in the United States, and outlines steps for action.

Recently, a major religious coalition organized by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (based at the National Council of Churches in New York City) targeted twelve corporations for their role in supporting the South African government: Burroughs, Chevron, Citicorp, Control Data, Fluor, Ford, General Electric, General Motors, I.B.M., Mobil, Newmont Mining and Texaco. Most are signatories to the Sullivan Code. According to *Investing in Apartheid: A Guide to U.S. Corporations in South Africa*, produced by National Action Research on the Military Industrial Complex (NARMIC), a program of the American Friends Service Committee Peace Education Division (Philadelphia, 1985, $2), General Motors outfits South African security forces with military vehicles, Fluor is involved in nuclear and coal-to-oil energy facilities, and I.B.M. and Control Data supply computers to government agencies.

Investing in Apartheid is a handy guide to some 280 U.S. corporations with subsidiaries and affiliates in South Africa, providing information about their sales, assets, locations, products and work force. A more extensive portrait of U.S. corporate involvement, including banking activities, is available in the *Unified List of United States Companies with Investments or Loans in South Africa and Namibia*, compiled by the Pacific Northwest Research Center and published by the Africa Fund in cooperation with the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid (New York City, $5). In both guides, the employee statistics are particularly revealing, as they illustrate the capital-intensive nature of much U.S. investment in South Africa. For example, Control Data had $44 million in assets and $19 million in sales there in 1983, with a total work force of only 313.

An earlier NARMIC publication, *Automating Apartheid: U.S. Computer Exports to South Africa and the Arms Embargo* (1982, $4), provides a detailed account of the computer sector. In 1978 a South African business analyst commented, "No other sector of the economy is as utterly dependent as the computer industry is on the multinationals . . . it is a sector through which a stranglehold can be applied to the whole economy." Instead, as *Automating Apartheid* shows, the computer giants—I.B.M., Burroughs, N.C.R., Sperry Rand, Control Data and others—have helped the white minority government keep a stranglehold on the black majority through the passbook system, "influx control," police repression and military force.

Automating Apartheid explains how U.S. corporations have circumvented the 1963 U.N. embargo on military sales to South Africa, which was made mandatory in 1977, as well as the 1978 U.S. ban on all sales to the military and other apartheid-enforcing agencies, which has been relaxed under the Reagan Administration. Thomas Conrad, project director for *Automating Apartheid*, outlined the new sanctions' many loopholes in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece on November 11, 1985, concluding, "They are designed to quiet public criticism but not to stop the flow of strategic technology to South Africa's police, military and arms industry."

These resources ought to provide an answer to anyone who argues that economic pressure against South Africa will only increase the suffering of the black majority. As Bishop Tutu put it at a recent press conference in New York City:

> For goodness sake, let people not use us as an alibi for not doing the things they ought to do. We are suffering now, and this kind of suffering seems to be going to go on and on and on. If additional suffering is going to put a terminus to our suffering, then we will accept it. . . . When did white people suddenly become so altruistic and suddenly become so concerned about black suffering, when over a long period of time those who have invested have benefited from cheap labor supplied by blacks?

* * *

Further Resources: *Africa News*, a biweekly digest, is an excellent source of information on South Africa, the continent and U.S. policy. The annual "Key Dates" issue gives a region-by-region chronology of the year's major events. Box 3851, Durham, NC 27702.

American Committee on Africa/Africa Fund publishes numerous resources on South Africa, including the "Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter" and the periodic *Southern Africa Perspectives*. 198 Broadway, New York, NY 10038.

TransAfrica is the national contac for the Free South Africa Movement It produces the bimonthly *Issue Brie* and a quarterly scholarly journal, *Trans Africa Forum*. 545 Eighth Street, S.E., Washington, DC 20003.

The Washington Office on Africa publishes periodic *Action Alerts* and a highly informative quarterly newsletter "Washington Notes on Africa." The 24-hour Africa Hotline (202-546-0408 provides news about apartheid. 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20002. □

FILMS.

ANDREW KOPKIND

Out of Africa
Sugarbaby
A Chorus Line: The Movie

Karen Blixen had a vivid imagination. In her life, as in her craft as the pseudonymous writer Isak Dinesen, she spun Grimm and gothic tales from woolly strands of memory and desire. She compared herself (in *Out of Africa*, the book) to Scheherazade, and she bore some resemblance as well to her Danish compatriot Hans Christian Andersen who indeed once traveled through Italy

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with her grandfather, an adventurous soldier. Judith Thurman, Blixen/Dinesen's superb biographer, reports that her subject often confessed to friends that she had seduced a cabin boy on the boat carrying her back from Africa to Denmark to be treated for syphilis. "He was too beautiful to resist, she liked to say," Thurman writes, "although she also claimed that she arranged for his treatment in Paris." You don't have to be gothic yourself (and who is, these days?) to succumb to the manipulation of eros and ethics in that tale of deadly passion. And the beauty part is that the confession, according to Thurman, was "almost certainly pure invention: [a] fantastic reminiscence."

Aspects of the B/D saga seem eminently filmable, especially the fantastic ones. It's unfortunate, then—can we talk? it's disastrous—that Sydney Pollack chose to concentrate almost entirely on a romantic reminiscence. *Out of Africa* purports to be about Dinesen, her husband, Baron Bror Blixen, and her lover Denys Finch Hatton in Kenya during and after World War I. In her own account, Dinesen arranged the elements of reality to form a fiction as fantastic as any she had wholly invented. Bror never appears; Finch Hatton is seen in fits and starts. The breathtaking contradictions of Blixen's intrusion on a history and a society she never grasped or joined are made to recede into the distance of her literary perspective. A night in Arabia, a day in Kenya: it is all the stuff of dreams.

Pollack's plan was to turn the years in Africa into a kind of docudrama, a rather literal chronology of marital unpleasantness and extramarital whoopee against a backdrop of natives and giraffes. Dinesen's gothic imagination is represented only in flash-forwards that provide bookends for the film and by a few short scenes in which she spins stories for men she is trying to seduce. There's a certain allure to all this; Meryl Streep as B/D and Robert Redford as Finch Hatton make a pretty white pair in darkest Africa, and their torrid affair reduces all around them to cold irrelevance. Redford is given a few lines about the endangerment of African species and the impending destruction of animal habitats—it wouldn't be a Redford movie without them, and one imagines the very words were written into his contract—but even as Sierra Club agitprop there's not much to chew on. The exotic creatures must have been shot *in situ*, but for all the originality of Pollack's conception they might as well have been clipped from an old Marlin Perkins *Wild Kingdom* episode. Streep, who produces a generic Baltic accent during the lazier moments of the film, is also given liberal sentiments so that an audience recently raised in consciousness by "We Are the World" will not be overly offended. She is occasionally humane to her servants; she builds a school for her plantation peasants; and in the end she pleads with the blimpish British colonial officers for a parcel of land in the White Highlands where her black protégés can settle. She even arranges for the treatment of a young boy's leg ulcer. Is he the docudramatic representative of the cabin boy she infected as she steamed out of Africa? That was Dinesen's fantasy; this is presented as Blixen's truth. The difference is what makes the movie so meretricious and, ultimately, corrupt.

Sugarbaby is immediately recognizable as one of those new Euromovies with the look of a perfume commercial and the erotic tension of peep-show porn. It's got Fassbinder all over its face: the pinks and purples, the Sirky, quirky camera angles, the music-video editing. It has a Fassbinder heart as well: the Berlin blahs, an obsession with humiliation and the advocacy of inappropriate love. Less raunchy than *Taxi zum Klo*, more controlled than *Christiane F*, simpler than *The Fourth Man* and cuter than *Diva*, Percy Adlon's fable of the fat and the lean is nonetheless in the same emerging European tradition that is putting postmodern images on the screen.

Marianne (Marianne Sägebrecht) is blahed almost to the point of extinction. Corpulent to a fault, her days are framed by mortuary work and overeating. Hope for happiness seems long gone when she is literally struck (the screen goes white) by the sound and sight of a slender subway conductor (Eisi Gulp) several years her junior. Marianne embarks on an obsessive mission to find his name, his address and his habits. She develops an elaborate seduction strategy, acquires a hilarious new image and wardrobe, plies him with candy bars and finally gets him to her apartment on the promise of a home-cooked meal. Before they can eat they're bouncing all over the bed, and it's clearly love at first bite.

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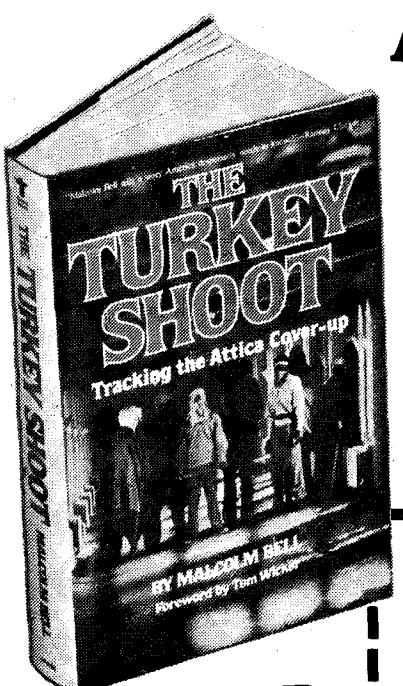

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As impossible as their liaison may seem, it is all believable as the characters swallow their pride, as well as everything edible in sight, and come out on the other side of humiliation. Sentimental in form, it becomes postsentimental in substance as the two-week lovers giggle, gorge and gossip their way through the brief encounter. But don't leave too soon. The movie isn't over until the fat lady screams.

What ever happened to all those nice kids from New York City's High School of the Performing Arts who vowed to live forever in *Fame*? Well they've all been auditioning for a chorus line in *A Chorus Line: The Movie*, and you can see the results in Richard Attenborough's film of the longest-running musical in the history of the universe. Almost as many people tried to make *A Chorus Line* as saw it, but to say that Attenborough succeeded where the others failed is to assign much more credit than is due.

There must have been a radical shift of theatrical linguistics in the past few decades, because the vocabulary of the musical just doesn't make sense to audiences anymore. Broadway is virtually bereft of the form, and those few attempts at revival have been egregious failures. Hollywood hasn't translated a major musical successfully since *Cabaret* fifteen years ago, and even that was an exception in its time. On the stage, *A Chorus Line* worked because, uniquely in its time, it did manage to find a new dialect for the musical. It turned a big Broadway theater into a rehearsal hall and invited the audience to participate in a performance as performance art.

The movie destroys the participatory element of the play, and thus brings us back to the dead language of the musical. The songs are mostly derivative or tuneless or both; the dancing is energetic but too familiar as that mixture of health-club aerobics and sidewalk breaking that's been done to death; and the confessional monologues that make up the book of the play seem dated and coy. Michael Douglas as Zach, the snarling Director-as-God, is almost unwatchable. On the stage, you rooted for the kids to survive the audition cuts; on film, you hope for their sake they don't. □

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ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Transformations in Sculpture

In the world according to Barnett Newman, sculpture was characterized as what you bump into when you back away from a painting to get a better look. So what do you bump into when you back away to get a better look at a piece of sculpture? At Transformations in Sculpture, the display of the last forty years of European and American sculpture at the Guggenheim Museum until February 16, you bump into the Guggenheim Museum itself. This means you get the look permitted by the constraining bays of that unaccommodating helical gallery, whatever the sculpture itself might demand or you might require.

This may not matter particularly when the sculpture happens to be one of Andy Warhol's facsimiled packing cases: it would be a caricature of esthetic refinement to imagine someone standing back for an exquisite appreciation of his replica of a Heinz ketchup carton. But it is antipathetic to seeing the Giacomettis, with which the show begins. Giacometti was a deeply optical artist, who dealt in vanishings. He once told me that his project was to represent the world as it would appear to someone without a sense of touch, whose experience of distal objects was accordingly purely visual. He also remarked that his pieces were justified by the shadows they made possible, and shadows, after all, are intangible entities. Experiencing a Giacometti is a complex optical transaction, as Sartre established in a famous essay. At too distant a range his pieces vanish into stick figures, at too close a range they disappear into their own textures. There is an optimal position from which shadow, texture and image synergize magnificently, which of course will vary from viewer to viewer. The glum institutional lighting of the Guggenheim is grudging with shadows, and its cramped spaces are inhospitable to the delicate adaptations of sight and meaning needed to liberate these works from their material embodiments. And this is almost tragic with an artist like Giacometti, whose remarkable sculpture is obscured by the thick glaze of overfamiliarity, and by a heavy grime of morose existentialist interpretation. Far from objectifications of *Angst*, his pieces are light and nimble and radiant with philosophical intelligence and visual wit. There is a technology for restoring works assaulted by physical degeneration, but when the mind of the viewer is separated from the work by layer upon layer of deadening belief, it takes great curatorial initiative to dissolve the psychic oxides and make the work fresh again. But such initiative is hostage to the severe parameters of the Guggenheim's architecture.

Perceptual inertness is only one of the indignities to which sculpture is subjected in this ruthless space. Another is the indignity of bodily misorientation. Certain works of sculpture have verticality as part of their meaning, but all works of sculpture have verticality as one of their premises. So, for the matter, do paintings, for whether or not we are to respond to the upward vectors of their images, as in an Assumption, everyone will be disturbed by a crookedly hung work. Louise Nevelson's characteristically imposing wall-piece *Sky Cathedral—Moon Garden + One* makes three vertical references in its title, and certainly it conveys, as part of its esthetic, a sense of vertical ascent that would be subverted were its base allowed to sit naturally along the downward slope of the Guggenheim's coiled ramp. For then diagonality would be thrust by physical circumstance on what was required to be plumb. The Guggenheim installers have therefore slipped in a prosthetic wedge, giving the piece a platform on which to stand erect. Since Nevelson's work exemplifies Diane Waldman's claim that one distinguishing mark of contemporary sculpture is the way it has climbed off its implied pedestal to join us on the ground, the wedge is inconsistent with the thesis the piece is meant to exemplify. Beyond that, it gives the impression of shoddy craftsmanship, like a book shoved under the short leg of a tippy table, as if Nevelson were incapable of getting her things to work. And finally, though the work is given an artificial rectitude, we have become diagonal, and as we lear this way or that to get in touch with the work, the work starts to lose its balance

Maintenance of bodily orientation i not something we can choose to do o not: it is one of the modules of our sen sory system. This, coupled with the pre suppositions of viewing sculpture, in duces a sense of sustained estheti discomfort with such works as Nevel

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son's, in any case crowded into an imprisoning corner and poorly illuminated. It can even cause a certain indeterminacy of interpretation. I was unable to tell, for example, whether Barnett Newman's *Here I (to Marcia)*, consisting of two elongated bars rising upward from a base, was slightly canted, or if I was imposing my own involuntary imbalance on an objectively vertical structure. I inferred verticality, partly from the fact that the museum had slipped one of its compensatory wedges, like an angular coaster, under the piece, and partly from my knowledge of Newman's zips, which the bars seemed to resemble: zips don't lean like Pisan towers. But such inference occurs at the wrong place in one's experience of the work: if it is vertical, one should experience its verticality, not derive it as the consequence of a spatial syllogism. As it stands, it is like trying to guess the notes in a piece of music occluded by static.

The architecture interposes obstacles to appreciation at every step, even where, as it were anticipating that he might someday be exhibited in the Guggenheim, Carl Andre has sought to achieve maximal flatness. His *Lead Piece* consists of 144 lead plates, each one foot square, laid like a protective floor in the radiation laboratory. But of course the ramp tips it at an angle, making it look foolish. The only piece that somewhat profits from the slant is Richard Stankiewicz's *Untitled*, which takes to the slope like an expert skier. The work consists of a column of steel slanted so that it rests on its lip. The angle of the column is opposed, chiefly, by a sort of horizontal drum. So it leans against the inclination of the floor, gaining an accidental energy. But suppose it had been rotated to lean the other way? Then it would feel positively dangerous, its angle of lean amplified by that of the floor.

The exhibition is a kind of chronological anthology of sculpture that has been important through the past four decades, and this format imposes an indignity of its own. For it wrenches each piece out of any context that might give it meaning, imprisoning it in a time cell to correspond to the spatial cells in which the visitor keeps hopeless company with the sculptures until the downward urging of the ramp moves him to the next thing. Chronology is the weakest of temporal structures, and at the same time the most reductionist, for it only situates things in terms of before

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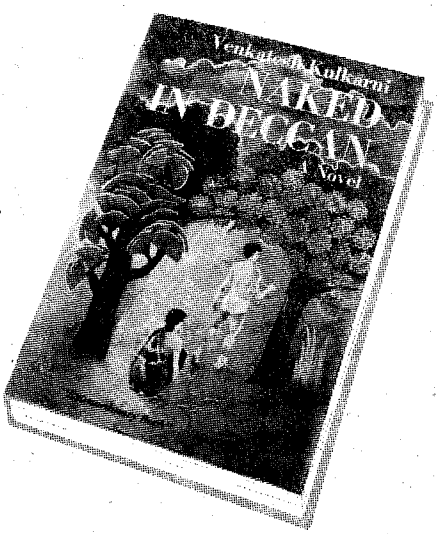

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and after. Chronology does not deal with beginnings and endings, only the ordinalities of time. There is no question that in terms of chronology, Giacometti should stand at the earliest position in the anthology. But it is far from clear that he belongs to the same history as the rest of the show. If anything, he marks the culmination of another history, pointing back to Etruscan art and to Surrealism, or to the Beaux-Arts paradigms of sculpture his discoveries subvert. Giacometti said, "After me, there will be no one to try to do what I am trying to do," and while this is perhaps false, it requires a degree of historical interpretation to see why it might be so. This requires more knowledge than chronology can disclose.

It might, on the basis of certain visual analogies, be argued that the unfortunate statuary of de Kooning refers to Giacometti as a source and even an inspiration. Both men worked with clay on armatures, and in both cases we are aware of the moves and gestures of molding: the clay retains the traces of its having been formed. But in fact de Kooning's lumpy mannequins refer us less to the history of sculpture than to the impulses of his painting—and this is what, in a way, he shares with Giacometti, who regarded himself primarily as a painter who resorted to sculpture as an alternative exploration of parallel effects. The most striking feature of the show is how many of the artists were (or are) primarily painters: Rosenquist, Lichtenstein, Johns, Kelly, Youngerman, Warhol, Giacometti, de Kooning and Newman himself. And it is as though sculpture, for them, was less a mark of versatility, as with Michelangelo or Leonardo, than it was a necessity and a consequence of internal transformations in the concept of art. This is the history to which Giacometti does not belong, even if it is true that for him sculpture was to be appreciated in terms appropriate to painting.

When Newman put sculpture down as what you bump into when trying to see painting, he expressed an ancient snobbery common to painters. This snobbery was connected with the social ascent of painters in the Renaissance, who were anxious to put as much distance as possible between their art and the practices of manual laborers. The sculptors' atmosphere was one of dust and dirt, mud and plaster, mallet taps and hoarse shouting. But the painter, in his velvet biretta, could discourse with poets and philosophers as he touched the surface of his tableau with the delicate point of an elegant brush. Painting, like poetry, sublimated the matter of its art in favor of the illusions of imagination, while the sculptor was imprisoned by materials. Newman made his remark just at the moment when a complete reversal had begun to set in. For one thing, the illusions that seemed to exalt painting to a higher realm of the spirit had begun to be suspect. Definitions of painting were abroad which saw it in terms of pigment: painting was the physical process of depositing physical substance on physical surfaces. And there was, at the same time, a transformation in social attitude toward physical toil, which was vested with a certain proletarian dignity. Both transformations were reflected in the standard artist's costume of Newman's era: the paint-streaked overalls, the dirty jeans and muddy boots and smelly flannel shirt of the laborer implied a certain honesty, while the monosyllabic grunts of the Dumb Artist, seasoned with obscenities, became the affected discourse of very clever men and women. How could Newman resist turning to sculpture, despite his Renaissance prejudices?

By insisting that painting was nothing but a physical act with physical objects, the boundary between painting and sculpture was *already* crossed, and the logical next step was to liberate painters' forms from the necessarily illusory space that kept them from being real. Newman's *Here I (to Marcia)* consists in the transfer from painterly space into the three real dimensions of his zips. One of the zips has molded painterly edges, the other has clean linear edges. It was like Pygmalian breathing life into fantasy, turning art into something one could bump into. And through the 1960s, sculpture seemed to have become a means of conceptual jeering at painting, though painting itself was often a kind of jeering at the axioms of an art theory that made the move to sculpture a *reductio ad absurdum* of itself. Lichtenstein's portraits of brush strokes is a case in point. It is as though this artist pretended to understand the Expressionists' claim that painting itself was the subject of painting in such a way that one was now making paintings of painterly acts, the way artists used to make paintings of Madonnas and saints. The show is full of such jokes. George Segal constructs, with mock literalness, a three-dimensional counterpart of a mildly Cubist drawing

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by Picasso, as though Picasso had done a highly representational study of what happened to be some real fragments—a chair back, a wet mop, a rubber ball—of a woman uncertain of how to make some order out of the jumbled interior of her life. Rauschenberg dribbled some paint over the hapless muzzle of a stuffed goat, as though taking the Expressionists at their word that paint was to be considered reality itself: Why bother using canvas? Why not a goat? Or a quilt? Or any convenient thing?

This is certainly a main dimension of the history. The other main dimension comes from the fact that sculptors, as if themselves infected with the Renaissance prejudices, had sought to advance their art by assimilating it as much as possible to the condition of painting. This was certainly David Smith's project, with whom the history might properly have begun. Welded sculpture in the 1940s and 1950s was explicitly described as "drawing in space." Smith's *Steel Drawing 1* uses sheets of steel like sheets of paper, and his acetylene torch like a kind of stylus. The work has the character of a three-dimensional picture. So what painting bumped into when it stood back from itself in order to become like sculpture was sculpture backing away from itself in order to become like painting. This double backspring, in which painting and sculpture pass each other on the way to becoming each other, makes a very comical narrative: the sculptural painter now may contemplate himself as a painterly sculptor, as in a mirror. And vice versa.

The Guggenheim is beginning to look shabby. The highest ramp is filled with pieces of stowed paraphernalia, as though it had been turned into a kind of attic. It is a very ill-considered perversion of architectural intentions. The light is so bad one feels the management is trying to save money on electricity. The wonderful reflecting pool with which the great slow spiral used to end has been cemented over, inducing a terrible opacity where light was once captured by water. The walls are dirty. In an exhibition, as in a meal, presentation counts for something. This is a graceless show. What could have been an exhilarating experience has been turned into a dull textbook of modern sculpture. Both times I visited the show I left depressed. □

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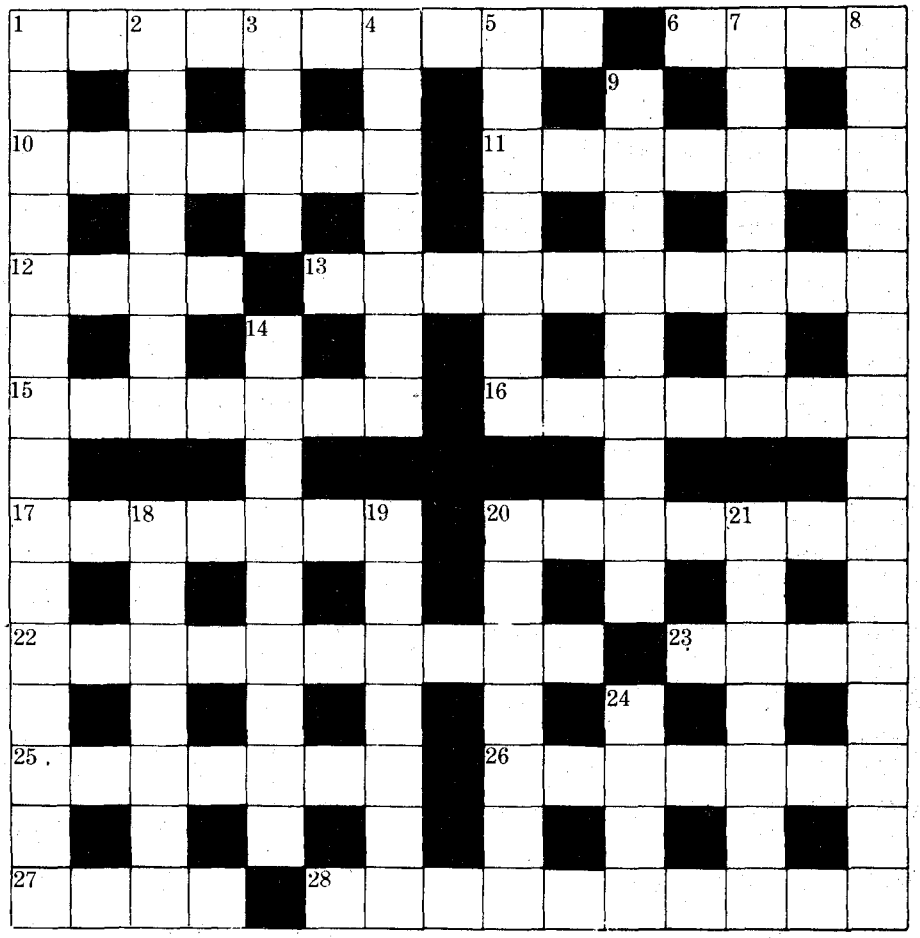

ACROSS

1 One fights, but not against change. (10)
6 What they called Mrs. Hamilton was certainly not "Mame"! (4)
10 An exporter might hope to, and shape up the alternative. (4,3)
11 A composer is heartsick, on returning to it. (7)
12 This is usually up to something. (4)
13 Do the Italians in particular find it a little funny to arrive and forgo eating, at returning? (10)
15 Lots of soldiers, but the small company ends up short, perhaps. (7)
16 Sort of late—possibly five to four—in the capital. (3,4)
17 Thinking of nothing—longing for something. (7)
20 Set improperly in a circle, and staying that way. (7)
22 The old song told us to try a little, being one who might care where the monster might be. (10)
23 Not, by the sound of it, a difficult problem, perhaps. (4)
25 A kind of sauce—a couple of sailors need direction this way. (7)
26 A kind of gin at one time associated with a place for certain weekend activities. (7)
27 The language of unnumbered verse. (4)
28 One way to look with favor on a famous athlete, or just founder in the South. (10)

DOWN

1 Far from concrete in name and deed, perhaps. (8,2,5)
2 Win in the attempt, one hears, to get a hump straightened out. (7)
3 A ruffian in the labor dispute? Be off with you! (4)
4 A little egg made sour with a kind of acid? (7)
5 Sort of sticks around one point? Well, far from it! (7)
7 Throwing such a cocktail party might be violating the law. (7)
8 and 14 Possibly bear the first, stock the second and lead the last of the possibilities. (This covers everything!) (6,9,2,7)
9 One shouldn't think this way! (9)
14 See 8
18 In certain ointments, the working parts might be somewhat common. (7)
19 Begins English, the root of which is apparent. (7)
20 Sort of lies with a broken rib? That's funny! (7)
21 One intends to be so, using what 7 describes as a sort of gin, at an unusual rite. (7)
24 This might cause a scratch. (4)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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